

LITERARY REMAINS

OF

JOHN FOSTER.

AN ESSAY
ON THE
IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

BY

JOHN FOSTER,

AUTHOR OF "ESSAY ON DECISION OF CHARACTER," ETC.

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WITH A PREFACE BY JOHN SHEPPARD.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

SOME account will be naturally expected of the materials that compose the present volume, and of the extent of revision they have undergone in their preparation for the press.

The Essay on "The Improvement of Time," though it now appears as a posthumous publication twenty years after the decease of the Author, was one of his earliest productions. The notices of it in the "Life and Correspondence" show that it was begun almost immediately after the publication of the four Essays which at once created and established the Author's reputation, and by which he has ever since been known as *the Essayist*. He appears to have entered on its composition with vivid interest ; for, in a letter to Mr. Hughes, August 20th, 1805, he says : "I am now beginning an Essay on the Improvement of Time, for which I have thrown together a large quantity of rude materials, and which I foresee cannot be furnished in less than a moderate volume. The subject *suits me much*, and I hope I may be able to finish it by the end of the year."* But as he proceeded, the theme gradually lost its fascination, for rather more than twelve

months later he speaks of it as a task to which he was driven by self-flagellation. "As to fine figures," he complains, "not one of them ever comes near me. The utility of the business will be the only consolation—of that I cannot altogether fail."* To his friend Mrs. Mant, he says (October 7, 1806), "I am now going to labor hard a number of months, in order to produce some kind of a volume in the next spring. It is a slow, a tedious, and a disagreeable work, but I must do as well as I can." Meanwhile the booksellers had heard of it, and were loudly calling for it; but in vain. In 1809, Mr. Hughes exhorted him to revise it,† and ten years later inquired, "What is become of the Essay on the Improvement of Time? I have never been permitted to glance at one of its pages." One or two reasons which induced him to abandon the work may be conjectured. He was not composing it under the same genial influence which animated him in writing the Essays; he had also been obliged, through ill health, to relinquish the pastoral office, and was thrown entirely for support on his literary exertions; and he had entered on his engagement with the *Eclectic Review*, which, however small the remuneration, offered a quicker and a surer return for literary labor than could be expected from an independent publication.

The original manuscript consists of nearly 100

* Life and Correspondence, vol. i, page 281 (Bohn's Ed.).

† Life and Correspondence, vol. i, page 337 (Bohn's Ed.).

foolscap pages. For the most part, the writing is very neat and uniform. Here and there, passages occur written more hastily ; but nothing in the structure of the sentences indicates a less careful preparation than is shown in the rest of the Essay. Throughout, single words or phrases are inserted, which seem to have been intended for further consideration, on the final revision of the work for the press. To these, of course, the attention of the Editor has been directed ; he has selected those forms of expression which appeared most suitable ; but in a number of instances, perhaps the majority, he has adhered to the phraseology first adopted by the Author. A few unfinished sentences have been omitted, which, by their retention, would only have given a greater appearance of incompleteness to the Essay than really belongs to it. But in no instance has he presumed to substitute his own for the Author's language,—a most unwarrantable liberty, even were a person possessed of the critical skill and literary eminence of a Jeffrey or a Macaulay.

He is also responsible for the division into paragraphs, and for the analysis given at the beginning of each chapter.

Though, in point of literary merit, this posthumous volume may not hold an equal rank with the more finished productions that were published during the Author's lifetime, and subjected by him to repeated and careful revision, yet it is presented to the public with the firm conviction, that in elevated views of

religious truth, and a profound acquaintance with the human heart, it is not unworthy of being associated with them—and that, like them, it will powerfully tend to impress on thoughtful and cultivated minds those principles of action which are indispensable for the present life, and for the great Futurity beyond.

J. E. RYLAND.

NORTHAMPTON,

May 15, 1863.

P R E F A C E

TO THE

ESSAY ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

THERE is a special interest, and indeed solemnity, in looking back almost sixty years to the first interviews with one whose marked originality and brilliant vigour of intellect, created in my inexperienced youth deep sentiments of pleasurable wonder, and tended to expand and elevate the range of thought, by acquaintance with the bold flights of genius.

In the diary of a venerable friend, lately deceased, I find frequent passing references both to the preaching and conversation of JOHN FOSTER, which will illustrate the effect produced by each on capable and susceptible minds, while he resided at Frome, in 1804 and 1805.

"This morning," says the excellent writer, "Mr. F.'s impressive voice awakened contrition in my heart and renewed the fervent desire to live more like an immortal being."—"Mr. F. spent the evening here. It was one of his best moments, and his conversation was indeed delightful; without those very wild speculations into which his imagination

sometimes deviates. His closing prayer was excellent—such as man, erring, yet sincere, should offer.”—“Monday evening we enjoyed a walk with Mr. F., whose inexhaustible store of conversation rendered it interesting.”—“Mr. F. gave us this morning one of the most solemn and interesting discourses I ever heard, from these words: ‘The end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.’”—“My mind has been this day both soothed and taught by Mr. F.’s better judgment. His subject was adapted to the state of my feelings: ‘Lord, and what shall this man do? Follow thou me.’ While I listened to his various and beautiful ideas, so tinctured with a fervent spirit of piety, I could not but think with pain by how slight a tenure they were held; how soon a higher Power might suffer the regular train of thought to fall into confusion and disorder.”*—“The fear of losing our very interesting friend, Mr. F., too much occupies my thoughts. The first intimation that his increasing malady might prevent his speaking in public, overpowered all my fortitude, and I felt too painfully how much I had rested on him as an instructor and friend. Nothing seemed capable of filling the void his absence must occasion. On Sunday his voice assisted to raise my soul in prayer, or his animated

* This reflection was no doubt suggested by an event at a distance, but referred to in the same diary only two days before,—the sudden mental derangement of a person distinguished by talent and eloquence, whose name is not given.

exhortations inspired the ardent wish to gain every Christian virtue. His delightful conversation gave the zest of mind to our summer walks ; and in the winter evening how impatiently have we expected him, to inform and enliven the circle. His ardent and eccentric character, never fully developed, his superior powers of discrimination and original fancy, ever keep attention awake, and excite a deep interest : but were this all, the admired companion might be relinquished with a passing sigh of regret. — In another view I behold him with feelings more permanent,—as the Christian seeking the favour of his God with persevering ardour, and despising, comparatively, the applause of all human beings ;—anxious by the highest improvement of time to prepare for eternity, and recommending it with energy to others. I had hoped to catch a spark of this heavenly fire : I had hoped to find consolation from him in the hour of domestic distress. In the course of two years many occasional incidents have given me proofs of his very high principle and piety.”

It scarcely needs be said how cordially I shared (although, from my fewer years, with less matured experience) in these impressions of my honoured friend, both as to Foster’s public ministry and social intercourse ; and how truly I partook her regret at that removal from us which the state of his health occasioned.

The words above cited evidently convey the senti-

ments of an intelligent and cultured mind. It is curious and instructive, in the way of contrast, to record the great differences observable in minds having very little culture, and, as to that derived from ornamental literature, none.

Mr. Foster, when he had become unable to address larger assemblies, sometimes preached in village rooms; and I have learned, that while some of the poor and ignorant referred to his discourses with distaste and pity, as not to be understood,—others, of the very same class, expressed the warmest acceptance and highest estimation of him and of them. This shews, what is perhaps not enough considered, that a good many minds, not artificially cultivated, have yet no small power to appreciate original and striking thoughts; and that not a few (except the hopelessly inert and dull) can be gradually awakened and trained to feel the difference of value between impressive lessons or suggestions, and those vapid commonplaces which sometimes much more abound.

The voice which so riveted and edified and excited us more than half a century ago, has now long been silent:—

“—— changed is the countenance revered,
And mute the instructive tongue.”

The voice, indeed, was not in *itself* so much an attraction as that of certain other speakers would have been. It was not the winning, captivating voice of Wilberforce, nor the soft but fervid utter-

ance of Robert Hall. His tones (as Dr. Vaughan has observed) had not pathos, and his utterance was not altogether faultless. One loses, therefore, less in only reading those thoughts and words which I delighted to hear from him, than would be lost in the instances just named.

So very familiar to us now, and, indeed, for ages past, have the treasures of the library become, that we are seldom fully awake to the recollection how high a privilege and matter of thankfulness it is, to possess, by the arts of writing and printing, a cheap and ample store of valuable thoughts, bequeathed by the good and great who have left our world. If some magician could obliterate that store, how would past wisdom and knowledge be suddenly annulled for us ; and if uninstructed how to begin any written record of thoughts and oral words, we should be reduced to the level of the king of Tonga, to whom (Mr. Mariner relates) the expression of facts and sentiments by writing was "an inextricable puzzle—altogether past comprehension."

While we so often have good reason to regret the publication of words which might far better have remained in oblivion or have entirely perished, there is but the more cause for satisfaction and gratitude when "right words," forcible and precious, although for years or even ages reserved in privacy, are at length published and diffused.

I imagine that my departed pastor and friend,—if spirits may know what happens here,—would be

glad that a manuscript to which he had given some earnest study, should be rescued from concealment, and brought under the view of thoughtful readers. Not, of course, from that vanity or egotism to which he was ever signally superior, and must be, unspeakably, in that exalted state on which he has entered. Doubtless his perception has become yet clearer of what he well knew and frequently expressed while with us,—the exceeding poverty and inadequacy of human language, the infantine weakness of earthly thought. Yet I believe he would rejoice at the publication of what he now knows still better to be so far from perfect. For he also knows that it conveys much, and perhaps all, which human minds ordinarily, with their present organism and development, could understand and receive, as to the topic in hand. If conscious also that it might have acquired a somewhat more correct form and effective expression by his own revising labor, he must be yet aware that the original thoughts and suggestions are of far higher worth, towards the improvement of other minds and characters, than any points of more perfect order or exact finish on which his talent and discrimination might have been occupied. The structure of sentences may be deemed sometimes cumbrous, and perhaps some trains of thought are more laboriously or exhaustively pursued, and illustrations more multiplied, than his later standard of taste would have dictated ; but intelligent readers will everywhere discern the same rare faculty of

profound and accurate observation, and the same habit of acute introspection, which his other well-known "Essays" evince.

The recollection that I offered, heretofore, almost all which memory furnished,—in the "notices" annexed to the "Life and Correspondence of Foster," by Mr. Ryland,—has rather disinclined me to attempt the preface which I have been requested to supply ; it may, however, be in some sort a plea for thus acceding, that I now view my ancient friend's character from a more distant standpoint, and that the unpublished piece here offered may illustrate to myself, as well as others, and lead me to review in some new aspects, his intellectual and moral qualities.

These were eminently peculiar and uncommon. Imagination and wit, with a cast of temper naturally satiric, were prominent ; accompanied by a Christian honesty which precluded and contemned all affectations. There was a certain harshness in his judgments concerning persons of high rank, partly ascribable to the early associations of his life ; but partly also to the fact that he had observed certain cotemporaries who had risen by force of talent from rather low positions in society, to have made changes in their political views and social deportment which he held to indicate a servile and selfish compromise. I think he adhered the more strongly to some severe and not always quite equitable estimates, from a resolve no way to imitate what he regarded as time-serving assentation or worldly conformity. There

was, mingled with his vivacity and flights of fancy, a stern conscientiousness which reminded me of the spirit of Elijah.

At the same time, nothing could exceed his amenity and gentleness towards those whom he truly esteemed, or his kindness and cordiality to the lowly, and generous compassion for the distressed.

With regard to the subject of this Essay, "The Improvement of Time," I ought to be daily more profoundly affected by its solemn importance, writing as I do at a period of life several years later than my lamented friend was permitted to reach ;—a period when the irrevocable flight of the past, and the still contracting brevity of the mortal future, should make the value and responsibility of the small remaining loan to be felt far more than sanguine youth can feel it. Reviewing, as we must do, many portions of time carelessly misspent or utterly wasted in life's springtime and even maturity, when the treasure still seemed ample and in great likelihood secure,—with what earnestness ought we to devise and practice the best economy of that narrow lessening residue, to which, at farthest, the law of nature limits us !

It was the habit of Foster's mind to go deeply and searchingly into whatever subject he touched ; discussing even obvious and acknowledged truth in various aspects, by inspection of latent points, and viewing it in diversified lights.

A truth may be well and familiarly known, may

be even, as it were, self-evident, and yet on *account* of its very triteness, may the more need to be exhibited and impressed in detail, and brought out with a more vivid clearness.

In speaking of Time, we speak of the very ground or substratum of a creature's existence. It is strange that what is so invisible and abstruse should be thus essential. Magnetism, air, empty space, are invisible ; but we can conceive of their absence, or not-being ; whereas we cannot, I apprehend, conceive, in creatures, of the absence of succession. When the author of the following Essay refers to duration as "probably a pure nonentity," he must intend, as I suppose, only the negation of *material* entity or subsistence. Should it be asked, If time be something, yet not material, is it then spirit ? May we not reply, as Locke does to a similar query concerning space, by another question : " Who told you that there is and can be nothing besides solid beings which cannot think, and thinking beings that are not extended ? " *—or, as Lavater : " Must all be either spirit or body ? Can there be no kinds of existence (*Wesenarten*) for which we have absolutely no name ? " † Professor Thomas Brown has said : " Continuous length and divisibility, those great elementary notions of space, and of all that space contains, are found in every succession of our feelings. There is no language in which time is not

* Essay, book ii., c. xiii., § 16.

† *Aussichten in die Ewigkeit*. Band i., p. 407.

described as long or short,—not from any metaphor,—for no mere arbitrary metaphor can be thus universal and inevitable as a law of human thought,—but because it is truly impossible for us to consider succession without this notion of progressive divisibility attached to it.”*

“Kant,” says Dugald Stuart, “assumes the truth of that much contested and to me incomprehensible doctrine, which denies the objective reality of time; and yet pronounces it to be *absolutely the first formal principle* of the sensible world.”†

If we can imagine finite beings to exist where all discernible measures of time, natural or artificial,—the revolutions of worlds as well as the instruments founded on these,—are annihilated or unknown, a state where the mind knows nothing of locality,—still I conceive the idea of succession, of past, present, and to come, as real, must lie at, or rather *be*, the very basis of conscious existence.

The “eternal Now,” the entireness of unsuccessive Being, can be an attribute of the uncreated Infinite alone.

This being so, Time is a possession which must concern us for ever. The true notion of everlasting life as to its duration, is unending Time.‡ The

* Lectures on Mind. Lect. xxiii., p. 144.

† Prelim. Dissert. I. to Ency. Brit., vol. i., pp. 280, 281.

‡ The words of Rev. x. 6 (which are rendered in our version, “There should be time no longer”), the best expositors think should be rendered, “There should be no more delay,” or, “The time shall not be yet.” See Bloomfield, Doddridge, Lowman,

contrast,—if Divine mercy enrich us with “the gift of God, eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord,”—will be, in this respect as in others, a contrast of exceeding penury and boundless riches. Here we are each and ever conscious,—for this and the other aim or undertaking “the time would fail me :”—like the heir described by St. Paul, still a child “under tutors and governors till the time appointed of his father,” our allowance is limited and scanty ; but by and by, except the inheritance be fatally lost by the waste and perversion of our moments here, we hope for treasures of duration more exhaustless than the funds of a Rothschild or a Croesus. Together with that ever abounding store of time, however, there must open an infinitude of scope for beneficent activity and devout research ; for the countless ministries of a love which never faileth, for the exploration of a universe which is all but infinite, for the contemplation of a Creator and Saviour who is altogether so. Thus while there will be ceaseless cause to exult with adoring gladness in the full and undiminishing sufficiency of time, there can yet be no temptation to waste or lavish that celestial wealth ; since we must be certain that “an endless life” will not *more* than suffice for the delightful pursuit and accomplishment of endless aims, in accordance with the heavenly Donor’s will and in reverent subservience to His glory.

It will be evident to the reflective reader of the following Essay, as it doubtless was to the able

writer, that what is here termed "the capacity of time" must greatly vary both with the intellectual and bodily strength of those who employ it; that, be their moral perception ever so awake as to its swiftness and its value, the amount of things to be effected in it can be only in proportion to their natural capabilities or acquired powers. Indeed, the writer has, in other words, passingly noticed this. "Quick and slow, as applied to action, are, after all, terms as much relative to the powers of the agent as to the succession of duration."*

It may, besides, be very reasonably questioned, whether some who have pursued reading to an unparalleled extent—as Magliabecchi—or who have written a very great number of books—as Richard Baxter—might not have benefited others more, if the one had interrupted and lessened his reading by attempts at useful composition, and if the other had composed a smaller array of volumes, with more resolute retrenchment of what was redundant, and a stricter scrutiny as to the quality of all which he produced.

I would further remark, it will be apparent that the ensuing pages must be considered as principally addressed to that class of persons, comparatively small, who can exercise, more or less, an *optional* employment of time.

In respect to the very great majority of mankind, the use of it has been almost wholly determined by

* Page 111.

governing circumstances. Time, for the many, is of necessity almost wholly taken up in the procurement of means of support for themselves and those dependent on them ; and their occupations are of a character in which (except as meeting that urgent claim) no high or special utility appears.

To such persons, whatever be their tendency or temper, the indulgence of indolence is forbidden by the exigencies of the day : they have not to suffer the listlessness and ennui of having nothing to do, but rather the weariness and sameness of monotonous toil. To them, above all, the right improvement of brief *intervals* of time is of peculiar value. It is, however, encouraging and consolatory to reflect that the merely manual or mechanical labours of multitudes may often leave the mind more free for optional trains and excursions of thought, than studious or intellectual pursuits can generally allow it to be. Working men or artisans, and persons occupied in the routine of ordinary trades, who possess benevolent and Christian feeling, may very naturally lament that they cannot be engaged more beneficially for others ; that it is out of their power to make a high and influential use of time.

But it should not be overlooked or forgotten by them, how very imperfectly we know what *are* or will be the best uses of time upon the whole. Who can determine whether one short sentence uttered, one thought suggested, one brief letter penned, one little tract or volume lent, by him whose hours are

almost all demanded for lowly and laborious tasks, may not sometimes effect more real good, than the continuous exertions of the student, or the wide schemes of the statesman?

Christian readers cannot but be gratified that the Essayist has made his subject the occasion of so eloquently and powerfully exhibiting the immense importance of the doctrine of a future life; and the baneful influence on the improvement of time and on all elevation of moral principle, which must arise from the rejection of that great truth; showing also, first indirectly, but by the strongest implication, and afterwards explicitly, the exceeding value of the Christian evidence, in raising those conjectural hopes which were alone entertained even by the best among philosophers,—to a steadfast and cheering expectation.

In an age when destructive and degrading theories respecting man's origin, nature, and prospects have so wide a currency,—when science, in the hands of unbelievers, seems to have for its chosen object the extinction of our best and dearest hopes,—reasonings corroborative of both those great verities on which all real goodness and happiness must be founded, are especially opportune and valuable.

Such Christian readers will feel, whatever be their impression as to certain points in this Essay, that the great aim or object for which it pleads—the Improvement of Time—was well and nobly exem-

plified in the life of its departed author. When we take into account the impediment of a chronic local ailment, and the general weakness of his health in later years,—the exertions of his mind both in oral teaching, and still more as a distinguished writer, must be regarded as ample proofs of the most conscientious and persevering industry. He has owned a constitutional inclination to desultory musings, and his own statements pointedly show that the task of composition, with that rigorous self-criticism which in his case it included, was not facile or inviting. Signal instances, happily, are recorded of the effect of his labour, in arresting the attention and changing the sentiments and practice of some among the sceptical and careless.

We may look with surprise at the improvement of time in other modes,—by the energy of highly remarkable men, as by the courageous zeal of Howard, the similar efforts of Venning in St. Petersburg, the various labours of Clarkson and Buxton, and those still continued by living successors;—all in their several spheres most exemplary and admirable.

Such achievements involve an unwearied locomotive activity, and, what is more rare, a brave firmness in collision with the tempers and prejudices of others, which the retired student ought the more highly to esteem in proportion as he feels incompetent to emulate. But still the faithful efforts of the proclaimers of revealed truth, aiming instrumentally

at the grandest of all designs—the elevation and renovation of the human soul, to prepare it for the loftiest society and the most Divine enjoyments,—have a sublimity and vastness which, although the world may ignore or scorn them, no other enterprises of philanthropy can attain.

J. S.

THE COTTAGE, FROME,
May, 1863.

THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

ON THE

IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

INTRODUCTION.

REASONS WHY THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME HAS NOT BEEN MADE THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE TREATISE. — DIFFICULTY OF DISCUSSING IT AS AN INDEPENDENT TOPIC. — THE GENERAL WANT OF DIRECT THINKING ON THE SUBJECT OF TIME. — ITS REMOTENESS FROM ALL RELATION TO THE SENSES. — A MORAL AND PRACTICAL, NOT A PHILOSOPHICAL, VIEW OF TIME THE OBJECT OF THE PRESENT ESSAY.

OBSERVATIONS on the value of Time, and admonitions relating to the manner of improving it, are found scattered in numberless parts of the writings of moralists and divines, and in the memoirs of the lives of eminent men; but I do not remember to have ever seen the subject exhibited in a formal and comprehensive work. The distinct consideration of it has been precluded partly by the facility and necessity of introducing it, as a relative topic, in aid of almost all other subjects of instructive writing. It has been placed in the situation of some active and public-spirited member of society, whose useful services are so readily afforded to every one that

needs and claims them, that he can hardly be said to have an interest, a business, or a possession of his own. Writers have probably been sensible of having too liberally expended the materials belonging to the subject, among the diversity of their moral arguments, to leave enough for a separate consideration of it. If it were possible to recollect all the striking sentiments of this kind which have been met with during the lapse of many years, and to recur to the books where they were found, they might furnish a compilation of extraordinary value. The happiness of possessing such a memory would far exceed any pleasure or advantage attending the production of a work from my own observation and reflection. And my readers are more privileged than I am, if they can distinctly recollect many of the passages which at successive times have disturbed the slumber of their consciences, in respect to the employment of Time. Excepting the impressive ideas in several parts of Young's Night Thoughts, which one should hope that no reader of that work can ever forget, I feel that very few accurate traces remain on my mind of the various interesting observations on this topic which must have been presented to me, in common with every one that has read a considerable number of serious books. The effect remains rather in a general habit of feeling, in a settled invariable conviction, than in the recollection of the particular illustrations, each of which in its time contributed to confirm that conviction. To

render that conviction more practically useful to the writer, is not the least of the motives for attempting to concentrate in one view the considerations which ought to make it absolute in every mind. Many of these considerations will inevitably be such as must have arisen in the minds, at some reflective hours, of all thoughtful readers of the following pages ; but such readers will readily allow that they deserve to be suggested and inculcated once more.

In the extent and diversity of practical illustrations, it may be somewhat difficult to prevent the subject from becoming a mere lecture on general morals ; since the Improvement of Time, in its most comprehensive sense, would be simply the same thing as the right use of life. Nor is there any determinate line by which the topic can be confined to a specific ground ; it must depend, through the whole series of pages, on the writer's discretion. All that can be promised is a constant endeavour to keep, as much as possible, one distinct object in view.

It is pleasing to be assured that there are some persons so wisely and strenuously employed, that the best essay on the Improvement of Time, could not deserve to suspend their labours long enough for its perusal ; and the example of these persons, wherever it is habitually seen, will be a much more animated lesson than any written admonition can convey. The number, however, is very small of those who will deem themselves to belong to this distinguished class, and a book may possibly find its way

where not one such example is familiarly known. There needs no apology for assuming, what is too obvious almost everywhere and every day, that the precious article is by multitudes held in great contempt, and very defectively improved by many more who are not entirely insensible of its value.

The waste of Time, or at least the self-complacent indifference with which it is wasted, is owing, in no small degree, to the want of direct thinking on the subject of Time itself, as something distinguishable from the concerns by which it is occupied. But few among either the busy or the idle ever reflect on that moral space within which all their actions are contained, and which is of the nature not only of a measure to mark their duration, proportion, and succession, but also of a standard to estimate their value. Neither of these classes generally consider the transactions of life as contained within anything but the local situation of walls or districts, or as to be referred to any standard more abstracted than a certain relation of these transactions to one another. The busy pass through a quick and constant succession of operations, with a view to attain some given object as the result of those operations, much rather than from being impelled by the duty of rightly filling up their time through every moment of the progress; and the mortification of the idle, at the end of a month or year, is only that they have failed to gain a certain object, and not that they have been really losing anything valuable. The wisdom or the riches

which might have been acquired would have been a substantial possession ; the neglected and lost time is felt as nothing.

This is one of the very few instances in which the apprehensions of mankind are unfavourable to the practical use of life, from being too philosophic. They are willing to consider duration as what it probably is, a pure nonentity, instead of indulging the grossness of conception by which a material substance is usually attributed to whatever has a name. No doubt imagination has sometimes attempted to raise this nonentity into a semblance of reality, under the form of a human figure with a scythe : but this is too poetical a conceit to be of any use in the common reflections on the subject of Time ; and the thoughts soon relapse into inanity from an image which carries to such an excess the attempt to embody abstraction. If Time, instead of this fantastic form of personality, had happened to become generally familiarized to the imagination of mankind, under the equally gross but more applicable figure of a widely-extended element, or a mighty stream, it had been more fortunate for moral effect.

In reflecting on the waste of Time in one's own past life, and in the lives of most other men, one has been tempted to regret that Time should be infinitely remote from all relation to the senses ; so that ample periods of it can pass away as unseen as a departing spirit, and as silent as death. From this profound abstraction of its nature, the most important article

of our possessions and expenditure in this life, has no chance of exciting the same degree of attention and care as the meaner, or even the most trivial kinds of useful property. We can easily imagine the emotions of a man, who, in a momentary mistake, or absence of mind, had flung, or by some unlucky movement, had let fall into the sea a small box of gold, or treasure which commerce has made more valuable than gold. We can represent to ourselves his eagerness and consternation on finding it gone out of his hand, and seeing it strike the surface of the water; and the agony of despair as it disappeared after being dimly seen for an instant, while sinking below. A misfortune of a less serious kind would produce a painful agitation; such, for instance, as a man's finding the contents of one of his casks of an expensive and delicious liquor, through some neglect, running off, without any vessel to receive them. It would be a still more pertinent illustration of the grief occasioned by the loss of the visible and substantial kinds of property, to imagine a man possessing a small estate on a coast where the sea is continually encroaching. With what a melancholy feeling he sees each year the sterile sand brought a few feet further, and after every storm a little more of the brink of his field washed away, the mound crumbling, and even perhaps the walls of his house beginning to crack, and warp from the correctness of their angle. With what anxiety he looks over the part of his ground that has not yet

been invaded, and calculates how long it may be saved, or in what manner most effectually cultivated. It were happy if Time had any signs as obvious as those attending the possession and the loss of these meaner articles, to remind us of its presence and departure, and to afflict us at its waste. But since it has not, it may be worthy of the moralist to look round for any means of giving such a palpable and cogent form to this great subject, that it shall irresistibly seize attention.

On reading thus far it will be perceived that it is not a philosophical, but a moral and practical view which I wish to take of the subject. As to the nature of time in the abstract, it will be sufficient to repeat, according to the well-known definition, that it is duration divided into measured periods, by certain events or phenomena which return, as we presume and have reason to believe, at equal distances. The phenomena by which these portions have been measured in all ages, are those regular changes in the apparent situation of the heavenly bodies which are caused by the revolutions of the earth and the moon. These are, in point of regularity and obvious exhibition, far the best adapted to the purpose, and, as a matter of sentiment, it is very pleasing to be indebted for our means of ascertaining the course of Time to so grand a machinery. The periods thus distinguished have the denominations of years, months, and days, with various other terms indicating the accumulation, or the division of these por-

tions. These fixed measures may be indefinitely applied along the line, if I may so express it, of an endless duration, and it is interesting sometimes to follow on in thought the infinite succession, till thought is lost. But these defined periods—days, months, and years—excite the strongest moral interest when considered as measuring out what is itself a very limited period, the space of human life. An inexhaustible series gives an idea of something so like profusion, that the value of single parts seems almost lost. But when the series is limited, at its utmost possible length, to a very short period, each portion of the succession becomes a more palpable object of attention. And if the short period, taken altogether, has a mighty value, the just share of that value can be affixed to each distinct portion; and it should be easy to awaken some ideas of parsimony.

Now in moral representations concerning Time, the word must be chiefly used in this meaning of periods of duration within what is itself a very contracted measure, the period of human life. In this sense the term will be employed in the following Essay, the first part of which ought to consist of some general considerations on the VALUE, the CAPACITY, and the FLEETNESS of Time.

Part the First.

CONTAINING

THOUGHTS ON THE VALUE, CAPACITY, AND SWIFTNESS
OF TIME, AND THE ULTIMATE OBJECT OF
ITS IMPROVEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE VALUE OF TIME.

- § 1.—THE VALUE OF TIME ESTIMATED BY WHAT IS ACCOMPLISHED WITHIN A GIVEN PORTION OF IT.—AN IMAGINARY SURVEY OF THE UNIVERSE, AND OF THE CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS OCCURRING THROUGHOUT IT AT A GIVEN HOUR.—THE RIGHT MORAL IMPRESSION OF SUCH A SURVEY IN RELATION TO OUR OWN CONDUCT.
- § 2.—HOW TO ESTIMATE THE VALUE OF A DAY.—ILLUSTRATED IN THE CASE OF A PHILANTHROPIST, A MAN OF SCIENCE, A WICKED MAN.
- § 3.—THE VALUE OF SHORT PORTIONS OF TIME IN GREAT EMERGENCIES. — ILLUSTRATIONS, EPAMINONDAS AND PELOPIDAS. — A VIRTUOUS GOVERNOR. — DAMON AND PYTHIAS. — DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS.
- § 4.—OBJECTION TO THIS MODE OF ESTIMATING THE VALUE OF TIME.—ANSWERED BY SEVERAL OBSERVATIONS.—OUR TIME, TAKEN THROUGHOUT, IS A SEASON OF EMERGENCY.—A LARGE PROPORTION OF PAST TIME MISSPENT OR NOT IMPROVED.—PRESENT HOURS, REPRESENTATIVES OF THOSE THAT HAVE BEEN LOST.
- § 5.—THE CASE OF PERSONS APPROACHING THE END OF LIFE.

§ 1. BOTH a character of dignity and the interest of surprise would accompany our considerations on the value of Time, if imagination could have an ex-

panded, though momentary, view of what is done throughout the universe in the space of each day and each hour. The importance of this moral space is in some sense commensurate to all that is effected within it by the whole series of created agents from the meanest to sublimest, and even to all that is performed by the operation of the Supreme Being himself. The confinement, therefore, of our faculty of observing, to an indefinitely small portion of this immense agency (excepting, indeed, what we dimly discern in the system of the heavens), contracts proportionally our comprehension of the worth of those portions of duration with which we may be allowed to say that all the operations in the universe are contemporary. But yet we can a little extend the sphere of our view by a strong effort to imagine the several parts in succession of that immense system of operation which prevails throughout the creation. We can endeavour to expand our contemplation to the whole order of nature as displayed on this globe, and think of the continual, though dark and silent changes in its interior regions ; of the process of vegetation prevailing over millions of square leagues ; of the action of all the elements in all their forms ; of the movements of an infinite multitude of animals, each of which is a mysterious system of active powers, complete within itself ; and of the collective operations of mankind, an agency too wide and diversified, probably, for the faculties of an angel to observe and record it in all its parts. We can then

extend our thoughts to some of the other worlds, and expatiate on the possible economy of their actions, according, no doubt, to the analogy of what we know in our own, but at the same time with some bold and sublime variations, especially that of an agency much less corporeal, and yet much more powerful than that of terrestrial beings. Next, we can, though very faintly indeed, form the idea of a boundless multitude of such worlds, each one thus occupied by an innumerable crowd of active beings, and perhaps all these worlds themselves performing the labor of various and immense revolutions, according to the laws of a system of which the harmony is preserved amidst the movements of a complex and everlasting activity. Our thoughts can finally approach toward the contemplation of the agency of that Infinite Power who sustains and actuates all this system, and just perceive the grandeur of the contemplation while sinking under its magnitude.

Now this immense system of operations, which, if divided into a million of parts, would in one of those single parts transcend and oppress our faculties of contemplation, if they were a million of times stronger than they are in any man—this whole system of action is going on at this very moment of time. Many of the agents within this vast economy may not have a similar mode of distinguishing duration that we have, but they are nevertheless performing their works in the same point of duration

which is now present with us, under the name of a moment or an hour. The Omnipresent Spirit perceives all but an infinite number of actions taking place together throughout the different regions of His empire. And by the end of the hour which has just now begun a greater number of operations will have been performed, which at this moment have not been performed, than the collective sum of all that has been done in this world since its creation. The hour just now begun may be exactly the period for finishing some great plan, or concluding some great dispensation which thousands of years or ages have been advancing to its accomplishment. This may be the very hour in which a new world shall originate, or an ancient one sink in ruins. At this hour, such changes and phenomena may be displayed in some part of the universe, as were never presented to the astonishment of the most ancient created minds. At this very hour, the inhabitants of some remote orb may be roused by signs analogous to those which we anticipate to precede the final judgment, and in order to prepare them for such an event. This hour may somewhere begin or conclude mightier contests than Milton was able to imagine, and contests producing a more stupendous result ; contests, in comparison of which those which shake Europe at this same time are more diminutive than those of the meanest insects. At this very hour, thousands of amazing enterprises may be undertaken, and by the end of it a progress made, which to us

would have seemed to require ages. At this hour, wise intelligences may terminate long and patient pursuits of knowledge in such discoveries as shall give a new science to their race. At this hour, a whole race of improved and virtuous beings may be elevated to a higher station in the great system of beings. At this hour, some new mode of Divine operation, some new law of nature, which was not required before, may be introduced into the first trial of its action. At this hour, the most strange suspension of regular laws may take place at the will of Him that appointed them, for the sake of commanding a solemn attention, and confirming some Divine communication by miracles. At this hour, the inhabitants of the creation are most certainly performing more actions than any faculty of mind less than infinite can observe or remember. All this, and incomparably more than all this, a philosopher and a Christian would delight to imagine. And all that he *can* imagine in the widest stretch of thought, is as nothing in comparison with what most certainly takes place in so vast a universe every hour, and will take place this very hour in which these faint conjectures are indulged.

And though the infinitely greater proportion of operations, which in the wide kingdom of the creation must be accomplished every hour, do not immediately interest us, yet I think it is not enthusiastic to let them associate their importance with the period of time in which they are taking place. The

hour which belongs to the labors of our duty belongs to an infinite number of labours besides, and we shall feel it a more sacred thing by recollecting what it *will* accomplish, though we should slight and waste it. We may thus, in thought, draw around us an infinite assemblage of agents, and operations, and results, all conspiring to scorn and to humble us for our indolence. It will become a mortification and be felt a crime to exist nearly in the condition of a clod of earth amidst this mighty system of energy ; and to surrender our time to inanity will seem like a protest against the whole universe and its Author. We shall be overwhelmed to think what has been done in those hours and days and years that we have lost ; and that probably still more is done every successive hour than has been done in any previous hour, since duration began to be marked into time. We shall be unwilling to yield to the languor, which, if all the operating powers everywhere should in an equal degree suffer it, it would be like death throughout the creation. We shall dread the impiety of slighting or wasting a portion of time, on which the Deity places all the value which He places on so much progress of His designs towards completion, and His works towards perfection, as can be accomplished within that space.

§ 2. Thus all the active principles and powers in the universe, even to the impulse that moves the last orb in the extremity of the creation, and the energy that may even have carried a daring adventure:

beyond that limit, seem to combine to urge on our minds the value of time. But if our thoughts dwell too long on views thus extending into immensity, they may make the utmost labours that we can accomplish within a given space of time, appear so inexpressibly diminutive, as to tempt us to repine at our littleness, and abandon all effort in despondency. It might seem in this wide system a very trivial consideration what use we may make of our few moments, or whether any use at all. We might be inclined to say, the whole sum of operations will be neither more nor less, our insignificant efforts being added or withheld. We must therefore be careful to retain a strong sense of our individual duty, and of the importance of our own action as to our own interests, while we feel the astonishment of so vast a view, and having taken a general impression of the worth of time, from all that is done in it, let us continually return to the consideration of its value to us, as illustrated by the good that we may obtain or accomplish in each given portion of it. This possible good should be strictly associated in our minds with every day and every hour, so that we shall constantly spend it with a precise consciousness of its value, and of the expense in spending it being equal to all that it could be employed to gain. What *class* of acquisitions and performances shall be kept in view as possible to us, within the respective periods of time, will greatly depend on what pursuits we most approve, and what characters we

most admire. It will depend also in a considerable degree on our specific department and station in life. An artificer, a student, a merchant, and a statesman, will necessarily have different views of what would be the utmost good which they could realise within a certain space ; and all would be aware that they could not accomplish signal things every day and every hour. Many spaces of the most indefatigable life, even in the most elevated departments of human action, must be of a common kind, and would be insignificant if they were not the connecting pieces between the more important successive actions, and preserving the continuity of the train. In selecting, however, the possible attainments and performances to be often recalled to the mind, as giving the value of time, it will be well for a man to take those of the very highest degree in the sphere of excellence within his power, and never let his estimate of time rest on that lower level to which its practical improvement *must* descend at many intervals, and during even long spaces. His estimate should be above the average value of time, if I may so express it, in order to prevent his habitual efforts from falling very much below it. The greatest value of any day should be taken as the fixed value of every day. Thus a man whose situation and powers are of that order which admits of great enterprise, of extensive bounties, or of any exertions which would have a great effect on mankind, ought to consider each portion of time in

which any of these exertions could be made, as exactly equal in worth to the effect of such exertions. At the dawn of any day he ought to reflect, that on this day a noble enterprise may be undertaken, the effects of which may extend through a district, a province, or perhaps a nation, and may go down to distant years. Such enterprises have often been undertaken in past times, and each had its appropriate day of commencement; perhaps such enterprises will somewhere be undertaken this day; this day is perfectly capable of such, and capable to him, since the means are in his hands, and the field of action is plain before him. He might perform some signal act of beneficence. There will be hours enough in the day; they pass away indeed very fast; but still they would stay long enough for him; the sun which is risen and now shines, would light him on his way to where this act would be done; and before it sets, we may trust that somewhere on earth such generous things will be done; he at least has the power that one such should be done. Now the utility of such an enterprise—the worth of such a signal act of beneficence, is precisely the value of this day to this man. And if the day shall pass away without this or any equivalent occupation, the amount of what he has wasted is the amount of all this good which he has not effected. And this is not all; for he may justly be held to have committed all the evils which these exertions would have removed or prevented. A man whose employment is science,

as he may be supposed much inferior to Sir Isaac Newton, will not at the dawn of the day fix his estimate of the coming day at the same high pitch as Sir Isaac might justly have done, in the morning of that day in which he saw the apple fall from a tree ; but he ought to fix it at the pitch of the best improved day that he has ever himself known. He can recollect what a considerable space of knowledge he went over, or the luminous conception of some important principle which he acquired on a past day of most resolute and patient application. Let the value of that day form the estimate with which he begins the pursuits of this. It is possible his utmost efforts may not obtain quite the same measure of success again as in that past instance ; but it is equally possible that they will ; and it is certain they will be more powerfully animated by acting on such an estimate of what they ought to effect, than if they were made according to a lower scale of duty and expectation.

Assuming the same principle in relation to the moral improvements of character, we may assert that to a vain and wicked man the value of the day is equal to that of an absolute reformation of his conduct ; equal, at least, to the commencement of such a reformation. For his conscience is sunk into a melancholy degree of apathy, if it does not remind him this morning that his reformation is the most positive duty of this day. Here and there an individual will be happy enough to accomplish this

duty; and then the difference at the setting sun between the moral situation of one such individual, and another man who closed yesterday in the same unhappy spirit and course in which this now reformed man also closed it, and who will end the present day just like the past—this signal difference gives the value of this short course of hours. And this is their value, not only to him that is reformed, but to him that is not; for why will not he also derive the inestimable benefit? The same duty, danger, motives, arguments, and pursuits, are placed before him.

With regard to the whole of the time comprised within the limited duration of life, we may justly assert that the value of this little accumulation of short periods is equal to that of the eternal felicity which it is the supreme concern of time to secure, and to which a wise improvement of it will lead.

§ 3. Another expedient for fixing the estimate of time would be to consider the very great importance felt to be connected with small portions of it in cases of great emergency. And most of us can recollect, within our own experience, occasions when a day or an hour has been felt of extraordinary value, and has been improved with an anxiety and effort far beyond the usual tone of our activity. When, for instance, through inattention, indolence, or mistake, we have deferred some indispensable undertaking till within a very short time of the hour when it absolutely must be finished, and have only just then

learnt the whole of its importance, we have felt a few hours a piece of property which silver and gold could not rival. We have looked at the clock, or at the altitude of the sun and the extent of the shadows towards evening, with an anxious wish to find that we have one hour, or one half hour more to come than we thought ; and have been impatient and indignant at any intrusion or incident which attempted to steal a few minutes away. Men whose profession requires them to make, before numerous or imposing assemblies, intellectual exhibitions which required much previous labor, and whose dilatoriness or avocations often defer this preparation till near the time for the public appearance, can easily tell how much more important a portion of time one hour has then seemed to become than the aggregate hours of many preceding days. It were easy to imagine much stronger cases ; that, for example, of a man who should be appointed to meet his trial for life or death, at a time so very near as but just barely to allow the space needful for preparing his means of justification, which are to be laboriously assembled, perhaps from many resources of argument and evidence. He would feel as if a few days or hours comprised the whole value of those years of protracted life which he might wish yet to live. Or we may imagine the situation of a man, unexpectedly summoned to go at a few hours' warning on a remote and a dangerous enterprise. What a misfortune he would deem it to be compelled to lose

one of these few hours which were all the time allowed him for a short adjustment of his affairs, for the indispensable preparations, and for his parting advice and benedictions to his dearest connections. He would wonder and regret to find that time is so short, and would perceive the termination successively of each of these few hours with a sentiment something like that with which he would witness the death of a friend. We can represent to ourselves the feelings of a man of high virtue holding some commission of great power and importance, which is shortly to expire ; as in the instance of Epaminondas and Pelopidas, who saved their country by commanding the Theban army, but were at a given day to resign the command ; or as in the case of a noble-spirited governor of a province who is soon to leave it. This virtuous governor would have highly prized every day from the very commencement of an office which gave him so much power to do good ; but the concluding days would seem so transcendently precious that he would probably feel wonder and regret that he should not have placed a higher value on all the preceding. On these concluding days he would almost lament the necessity of intermitting his exertions for the sake of refreshment and repose. It would be impossible for him to spend in light occupation, or to forgive himself if he did so spend, one hour in which a petition might have been heard, an important investigation concluded, a useful order issued, or an abuse reformed.

He would feel as if all the people of his province were suddenly become his children, and he were bound to make all the efforts for their welfare that a dying father does for his family. No prolix conversation even with his friends could be endured ; much less any idle chatting with mere acquaintance in order to preserve civility. When he awoke on the very last day of his office he would feel deep emotion, to think that now a few hours were the utmost scope of his extensive power of utility, and that he could not expand and multiply his powers far beyond those of a mere individual in order to do full justice to this concluding day. If he were a man of piety, he would in an earnest short petition implore that he might this one day at least not live in vain ; that hereafter he might be able to look back to this one day at least without feeling the guilt of indolence.

If we may be allowed to suppose, according to a popular representation of the fact, that Pythias had to return from some distance, to prevent the sacrifice of his incomparable friend, and that accidents or winds interrupted and retarded his journey, it may be imagined what would be his estimate of time when he was approaching the last hours of the allotted period. He might possibly have been economical and avaricious of time while prosecuting in former seasons his philosophical studies ; but he had never till now felt all the worth of a few fleeting moments. A few hours were now distinctly

measured against the life of his friend, and all the value which he attributed to that life belonged to those hours. He would utter the bitterest reproach that short hasty expressions could convey, against any person that attempted to detain him one moment by any frivolous claim of business or offer of pleasure. Still more bitter reproaches would seem to strike against his own heart, if he happened, in passing, to glance on a dial and see the shadow falling on the mark of even a more advanced hour than he had feared. At seeing so much of the time departed, and the rest departing, he would feel a severer distress than was ever suffered by a miser in observing a band of robbers carrying away his treasure, while he himself remained behind fastened to the spot by bonds. The minuteness with which he might have been adjusting some of his affairs in the presumption that he should have quite time enough left, would appear to him a detestable waste of it. And he would have been happy that those affairs could have been consigned to confusion and ruin, if but one of the hours consumed upon them could now be recovered. The remaining leagues and the remaining hours would be incessantly compared, with a trembling anxiety ; and as he urged his course forward, and sometimes passed by numbers of easy and indolent people, he would say to himself with vexation, What plenty of time every creature seems to have but myself !

A milder but still more dignified exemplification

of the powerful conviction which Time can give of its value on particular emergencies, might be imagined in the feelings and conduct of Daniel and his friends, during the short suspension of the fatal decree against all the wise men of Babylon. Though these four young men were probably less fond of life than any of the class threatened by the decree, yet they had many reasons for wishing to reserve it for some nobler danger. And each of them besides would feel an anxiety for the life of his friends, though he had felt none for his own. A long respite they knew would not be granted, and the next morning might terminate their lives, and fill the city and empire with mourning, if their intercessions with Heaven should fail. If only a few hours were allowed for those intercessions, we may well imagine that no interval of trifling interrupted them; that the earnestness of their prayers and their solicitude for their friends, became still deeper as the successive constellations appearing on the horizon indicated how fast the time was elapsing. While they waited for the signs that some divine communication was approaching, they would observe with a deep and pensive emotion that another and still another hour was departed, and no voice was heard, and no vision disclosed. The exercise of faith, submission, and prayer, would come to its hardest crisis at the dawn of the day; and except to Daniel, whose anxiety and devotion had been soothed into a slumber, in which the great secret was revealed to him, the

glimmering of the morning perhaps appeared as a warning that the season now approaching must be expected with the solemnity which belongs to the last hour of life.

These illustrations will instantly be allowed to prove the inestimable worth of the particular portions of time that happen to co-exist with some extraordinary occasions ; but I have introduced them to show the value of Time in general. I consider such emergencies as a kind of tests which have happened to be applied at some one point of the continuous whole of a man's time, and proving the general quality while operating on a small single part. And with certain allowances for the difference of the departments of action in which different men are to be employed, and for the obvious consideration that duties of different orders come in the whole train of duty, I maintain that the value of each portion of our time, after we have attained to an age of anything like mature reason, is substantially the same as of any particular portion which may happen to be spent under circumstances of extreme emergency, and is to be estimated by the same standard. And if this be true, how little are men in general apprised what a precious article they are consuming, and how much less than the just severity of remorse do any of us feel for having consumed so large a measure of it in vain !

§ 4. But it will be said that this is an extravagant representation of the subject : that life is not

a perpetual series of emergencies ; and, therefore, it is absurd to affix to each of the portions through the whole succession of time the same value which extraordinary circumstances may give to some rare occasional moments ; that there is a considerable share which may be innocently trifled away, and that the rest can be but of very moderate value, as to men in general, since it must be spent in the exercise of common occupations, in the enjoyment of very sober pleasures, and the acquisition of very ordinary advantages. I answer by several observations.

First. Our time, taken throughout its whole extent, is a season of emergency in the strictest sense ; for there is such a measure of duty pressing its claims on the whole length of life, and therefore on every distinct portion of it, as the utmost possible efforts cannot *more than* discharge, nay, with the utmost efforts will always do something *less than* discharge. Pythias actually *did* accomplish his object within the time. The man summoned to a sudden departure on a distant and hazardous expedition possibly *might* finish his preparations by the appointed hour. Daniel and his friends really obtained, to the full, the desired revelation within the time allowed by the tyrant's clemency. A *specific* undertaking which at first seems too much for the space allotted for its accomplishment, may often be finished by severe exertion even sooner than it was required, and leave, as far as *that* undertaking alone

is concerned, a short remainder of the time for indolence, repose, or self-congratulation. A manual or intellectual performance might be presented with an air of victory in the presence of an austere dictator who had indulged his malignity by requiring what he deemed beyond the power of his subject or his slave to perform. But the complex concern of all combined duties, the grand labour of cultivating all the virtues, though it is not the imposition of a tyrant, is a work so continual, so various, and so important, that the noblest labourer of virtue will never close one single day with the consciousness that *more* has been effected this day than his supreme Master had a right to require ; that actually *all*, even the minutest circumstances of virtue, have received the attention which they claimed, and that absolutely *every one* of these diversified particulars has been transacted in a manner which leaves him nothing, absolutely nothing, to regret, in reviewing the day in the presence of his Judge. And while this is our situation in regard to virtue, time, and the Divinity, when will the day ever come in the closing reflections of which this man may surprise and mock his complaining conscience, by justly remarking that such an hour of the day was better employed than it needed to have been,—that such a duty was too zealously performed,—that such a virtue was too profusely practised,—that such a vice of his nature was too indignantly or hastily repressed,—that such a train of thought was too

carefully directed towards wisdom,—that such an act of well-judged beneficence was too promptly performed ;—or, on the whole, that if all his days were like this, he would pass at length into another state of being with a more exalted kind of excellence than any one could reasonably wish to acquire in preparation for the transition ?

But if the most strenuous efforts of virtue, carried forward through every hour of our time, except what is surrendered to necessary sleep, will not only be unable to exceed in any one point the standard of duty, but will, in the judgment of every wise and good man, continually fall short of that standard in many points ; it follows that every portion of our time is in a predicament at least as cogent as the small space allotted for Pythias's return to prevent the death of his friend, or the short interval supposed to be allotted to prepare for a distant enterprise. And, therefore, the value of time, in such cases of emergency, is but the same as that of an equal portion in any part of the succession.

Again : many of us have cause to deplore that a large proportion of our past time, and in this a large proportion of the whole of our time, has been spent without being improved ; and this throws whatever may remain of it into a different predicament from that which it would have been in, if all the past had been improved. For though it is impossible to force into the latter division of our time a larger quantity

of virtuous and religious action than justice would have required for that latter share alone, even if the former had been perfectly improved, yet the motives to enforce the claims of this justice seem to be aggravated by the consideration of how much has been lost. If a number of the natives and ancient possessors of a country, formed into an army to defend it against the invasion and rapacity of an enemy, had through cowardice retreated before that foe over successive provinces and rivers, resigning each treasure, each cultivated field, and each fortress, almost without an effort, till at length they found themselves approaching the last district of their much-valued country, they would there at last, unless all valour, patriotism, and shame were extinguished, make a resolute and indignant stand. While they suspended their march to rest awhile on their arms, and looked round on the fields, the hills, and brooks of this last region of the abode of their fathers, they would recollect with grief and with anger against themselves, how many plains, and hills, and streams once their own they had now abandoned, and would pronounce the solemn, unanimous vow that here at least they will redeem their character though they had lost their nation, that they would give a sublime proof of their regret for what was now irretrievable, and that *this* field should be honored though they should see those other fields which their weakness had resigned no more.

We may be permitted to suggest another comparison. If a man had, through some most criminal negligence, though not actually intending so sad a consequence, been the cause of the ruin and death of a whole family, except one individual, with what an excess of interest his benevolence, his anxiety, and his regrets would centre in that lonely survivor. When weeping over the memory or the graves of those who were lost, and seeming to hear their voices faintly and mournfully reproach him, his thoughts would turn eagerly to the living person as in a measure a representative of those that could not be recalled, and he would anxiously ask himself what kind services he could render to that individual, in order to assuage his regrets, by endeavouring the utmost to make one of the lamented family happy. He would promote this object with greater ardour than perhaps he could ever have felt, but for the disaster which had left this person solitary in the world.

Thus a thoughtful man will receive the present hours with a full acknowledgment of their own absolute claims, and also of their pensive claims as a kind of representatives of so many that have been lost. The circumstances of the present hours and days remind him of those which were granted to him in vain. With this same brightness, he says to himself, the sun shone, nature appeared with this fair aspect, I walked thus on the fields or on the hill, I thus observed the approach of evening, I thus

saw the change of seasons, and was perhaps sometimes reminded of the fleetness of time, I had the same duties placed before me, and received the same support from the bounty of Providence, on those days which I misimproved, without anticipating how melancholy my reflections would at length become on account of the loss. Each hour seems the remainder and the remembrance of a thousand that have been thrown away. The mass of duty belonging to all these previous hours seems brought to aggravate that of the last without extending the space of it a moment; and he is alarmed lest the remainder of his time, possibly a very short remainder, should not be enough for the accomplishment of a work on which all these preceding neglects have now contributed to fix a character of extreme severity. Each successive hour seems to come to him with a significance and a voice to tell him what a vast series of hours he has destroyed, and to ask him whether the state of his great moral account will allow him to add one more to the number. This hour cannot plead an intrinsically higher worth than that of its predecessors, but it may admonish him that the ratio in the accumulation of guilt from the waste of time increases in an indefinite proportion at every diminution of a quantity which the next subtraction may annihilate. And thus he is reminded, in spite of all that can be said by the advocates of indolence or dissipation, that all his time is under as imperious a duty of extreme effort as

ever attached to any season of emergency in human affairs.

§ 5. This last idea suggests another proof that the general tenour of our time is to be held of equal value as those particular portions of it which are spent under circumstances of extreme urgency. That great number of persons in the world, whose entire remainder of life itself is but just the same space of time which is allotted to some other individuals for the execution of undertakings requiring extreme effort, are surely in a situation of equal urgency with those individuals. If we were acquainted with two men, of whom the one was to set off, suppose in three days, for a remote part of the globe, and whose concerns, therefore, would naturally require great effort during that short interval, and as to the other of whom it could be within our foresight that in three days he should leave the globe itself, which of the two would appear to us in the more extreme circumstances? In regard to which of the two would our judgments set the higher price on Time, and more strongly apprehend the folly if we saw them wasting it? Very few men, however, are disposed to admit that mere possibility of their being in this situation is a sufficient reason for valuing their moments according to the same standard as if they certainly were. And we ought not perhaps to deny that the consideration of the average length of human life will warrant a slight difference between the rule of estimating each portion of a

term that *may* be in a certain sense long, and of estimating the same portions of a term which *must* be short. Yet this difference can relate only to the specific *kinds* of duty which ought to occupy a given number of hours in the one case and in the other, and cannot exempt any moment from the most positive claims of duty in general. If a man at present in health could be aware that his life will terminate in a few days, it might be proper to devote himself exclusively to one or two classes of employments; whereas in that present ignorance and uncertainty of futurity which allows him to believe it possible he may live a number of years, his duty requires him to spend these very same few days in a variety of useful employments. It is admitted, too, that if he could be aware he should live only a few days, it may be extremely proper for him to apply himself to the duties of them with such a vigour and intensity of effort as could not be prolonged through months or years without destroying his health. He need not care about a slight injury to the machine which is so soon to be broken, to the structure which is so soon to fall. On the contrary, in looking to the possibility of living many years, he obviously is required to stop short of that extreme severity of application which would be likely soon to weaken or destroy the powers of virtuous activity. These are the only proper modifications in the estimate of a given portion of time, viewed under the respective conditions of certain death and uncertain life.

If the certain prospect of closing life in a few days, supposing that such a foresight could be given to a man in health, would justify or require this exclusive selection of virtuous employments out of the general assemblage of moral and religious action, and this extreme rigor of application to them, the uncertainty of life, on the other hand, adds to what would be the value and the claims of time even in the certain prospect of the longest life, a condition and an importance which claim a habitually strenuous though not severe and rigorous application to the general work of duty. A man in the situation which we have supposed, might justly reprove and compassionate another man who on the strength of the uncertainty of life deemed himself standing on far higher ground. He might say to him, You feel yourself eminently privileged above me by the mere possibility that you may live thousands of days, while I am certain to see the sun rise and set but a very few times more. I should think it a most worthy employment of one of these my latest hours, if I could suggest to you such considerations as should avert the evils into which presumption may betray you. You are internally gratified with your *possible* advantage over me; consider whether I have not a possible advantage over you. If it is certain that I shall live a given though small number of days, and certain also, as I believe it is, that I shall most earnestly improve them, have I not *more certainty* before me than you? And if it

should prove that your final period comes as soon as mine, and that in the expectation of a much longer term you have wasted this short and precious interval, how will stand the comparison between us then? Or if in this course of neglecting duty and wasting time you should reach the concluding moment one day sooner than even I, with what feelings, while I recall this interview, shall I hear of your death? You are still thinking with great complacency of the general average of human life at an age and in circumstances like yours, and of the great number that much exceed that average. But have not almost all the premature victims of mortality done so, and have you not often, when their hour was come, pitied their previous confidence? And did the hour in which you have heard of the exit of one of them, and thus compassionated his presumption, seem to you a space of time which you could with an easy mind despise and waste, as perhaps he had done that which preceded his end? In adverting to the average of human life computed with respect to persons of your age and circumstances, your mind deceives you into a feeling as if this average gave you a *certainly* of life so long, and as if *probability* extended far beyond this limit; whereas this average marks the utmost limit of mere probability on the just principles of calculation. And then, when you consider the endless hazards and modes of physical evil which attend on this probability throughout every day and every hour, it will appear that an extremely

small portion of certainty would be more than an equal foundation for confidence than the utmost anticipated turn of this probability. If, then, on the supposition that a long life were absolutely certain, each hour would, notwithstanding, be very valuable and the waste of it a crime; and if it would acquire a still stronger character of value and importance on the supposition that only the average length of life were certain, what must its value appear when this latter term has nothing but mere probability, a probability not equal as a ground of confidence with the certainty of one year or even one month? Under these serious circumstances you are called to consider what value you will place on your time; and how melancholy is the infatuation, if the total uncertainty throughout every day whether you are to see another, shall operate as a warrant for wasting that precious day. How melancholy the infatuation that can determine that, because the continuance of time is uncertain, all the value and advantage of it while it continues shall be uncertain also!

CHAPTER II.

THE CAPACITY OF TIME.

- § 1.—THE MEANING OF THE PHRASE, “CAPACITY OF TIME.”
—IN WHAT SENSE TIME IS OF EQUAL CAPACITY TO ALL
MEN.—NAPOLEON BONAPARTE AN EXAMPLE OF VIGOR
AND CONTINUOUS EFFORT.
- § 2.—EXAMPLES IN PRIVATE LIFE.—LITERARY MEN: MAGLI-
ABECCHI, CALMET, TOSTATUS, D’ANVILLE.
- § 3.—BAXTER, ONE OF THE NOBLEST PROOFS OF THE CAPA-
CITY OF TIME.
- § 4.—SIR WILLIAM JONES: HIS ATTAINMENTS AS A LINGUIST,
ILLUSTRATED BY THE CASE OF A SUPPOSED TRAVELLER,
YET ONLY THE SMALLER PART OF THE LABORS OF HIS
LIFE.
- § 5.—KING ALFRED: THE NAME SUGGESTS EVERYTHING
SUBLIME IN HUMAN CHARACTER: HIS MILITARY
ACHIEVEMENTS, HIS LEGISLATION, HIS DEVOTION.

§ 1. I USE this term to suggest the possible number of the successive operations of an individual, within a given period, or within the scope of a life of moderate length. This capacity of time, or this proportion between the lapse of distinguishable portions of time and the powers of human agency, is considerably favourable to the hopes and the efforts of virtuous activity; since it is evident in number-

less instances of various kinds that a vast train of successive acts may take place in the space of a year, a month, or even a day. This appears in many familiar facts ; as for instance, in the number of voluntary movements of the body in the course of a day, the number of steps taken by a person who walks all the day, or the number of operations performed in any mechanical employment which requires a quick succession of motions. It appears in the number of words uttered by a social and loquacious person, or by an official speaker, in the course of a few hours. It appears in transferring the attention and the eye to the vast multiplicity of successive objects, that, especially in a scene of novelty, are brought in view one after another, as in a populous city, where a man would be surprised if at the end of a month he could know how many faces, not to mention other objects, he has distinctly seen, as in a well-stored museum, or in the diversified scenes of a country through which a man travels. It would appear in its *effect*, by the accumulation into one assemblage of all the persons or things which a man could count and name within a day. It would appear in the operations of a diligent cultivator of a garden, if we could conjecture how often in the course of a few seasons he has moved each clod of the soil.* It is manifested, too, by its result in those great piles of structures which have been raised by the long and patient repetition of

* Another example, a weaver.

the operations of a comparatively small number of men. Few of these are among the instances of the quickest voluntary operations which men can perform. Many of them admit very sensible intervals of time in which other subordinate acts can be performed, and in most of them the same acts might, by a great effort, be performed in much more rapid succession. As for example : a man who walks at a moderate pace could, at least for awhile, make twice the number of steps in the same space of time by running ; or a man who uses a hammer might, for a little while, by a particular effort, repeat the strokes much quicker, or perhaps might in early life have acquired the power of habitually repeating them faster, without any greater sensible effort than his slower repetition costs him in his present habit. Now, all intellectual and all moral labors consist of a series of diminutive acts, each of which can be performed in so short a space of time that an immense number of them may be accumulated during the lapse of days, months, and years. And these acts are of such a nature that, like those operations of other classes which I have mentioned, they can be performed by an earnest activity in much quicker succession than they generally are. And as also a much larger portion of time than is usually thus employed could be rescued from indolence, dissipation, or needless pursuits, these two great advantages, pushed to the utmost, the increased activity and the ampler space, would enable a man to con-

found or animate all around him, and even surprise himself by the measure of performance which he might make his life contain. Most intellectual men are alternately delighted and mortified in reflecting what might, in their departments, be accomplished within, for example, those eighteen hours which they may be supposed to spend in a waking state out of the twenty-four. It will often occur to them what a number of ideas might in that time be assembled and digested into lucid order for the illustration of a subject ; what a variety of facts might be arranged and arguments balanced in the prosecution of an investigation ; how many times their thoughts might be sent out into the surrounding world for instruction, and come home again like laden bees ; what new regions of imagination might have been created from chaos and covered with beautiful scenes, with interesting persons, and diversified actions. When the easier work of merely reading is the employment with regard to which they are reminded of the capacity of time, it will be suggested to them what a large field of history they might traverse within eighteen hours, witnessing battles and revolutions, the rise and fall of states, and the wide and varying aspects of human nature and the human race, and becoming well acquainted with many heroes and legislators, of whom at the beginning of the day they barely knew a few of the names. Or they might take possession of the general outlines of a philosophic theory, or a knowledge

of the first principles of a science, or a better acquaintance with the present state of a considerable portion of the globe. Or in this length of time they might pass through all the scenes of an epic poem, which engaged the genius and study of the author for perhaps many diligent years of his life. Or if they were endeavouring to acquire an ancient or foreign language, the unintermitted application of a few days, each consisting of nearly this number of hours, if any mortal resolution or patience could support such labour, would bring them a great deal nearer to the feeling of full intelligence on opening an ancient author, or hearing the discourse of a foreigner, than they were at the beginning of these few days. And the conception of what would seem possible to be done, in a given number of days, contrasted as it very often is with what they actually do accomplish, inflicts the severest mortification.

Time is to all men in health and possessed of the ordinary faculties of human nature, of exactly equal capacity with regard to the possible reiteration or constancy of application, though varying according to the difference of human abilities, with regard to the success and effect of that application. Happily this proves that, with regard to virtue, it is exactly equal to all. And if it might be measured by the whole extent of the various duties enjoined on man by his Creator, it is of great amplitude. Allowing to Time the utmost possibilities ever realized in it by the most zealous industry that ever existed, its

capacity cannot be made sufficiently extended to give room for one indulgence of folly or neglect, in any part of the life of a man who is resolved to attain all the virtue which is possible to a mortal, and all the knowledge which can be useful in his circumstances ; who wishes to do all the good to other men which the highest Christian benevolence can suggest, and who is anxious to rank with the most eminent saints on earth, or of past ages, in devotion to the Almighty. This man will attentively observe what a portion of excellence, either of action or communicated thought, some other man can press into a narrow space of time, and will recollect perhaps a few of his own best hours ; and while he is trying to make his hours habitually contain the same measure, it is easy to imagine how often he is likely to find them too long.

Examples would be the best illustration of this topic ; and if we could exclude from our consideration the *moral* quality of men's activity, we might find many instances of a vigour and continuity of effort which may in one sense be called an improvement of time, which is at least a strenuous employment of it. And the disgust and contempt excited by a high appreciation of time, for a lazy and inanimate manner of consuming it, may be sometimes so great as to tempt us to remit the exercise of our moral discrimination in praising the opposite manner. Almost *any* kind of diligence will appear in the contrast a respectable thing. If anything could induce

a momentary tolerance of the meanness of an avaricious man, it would be the comparison of that incessant activity by which he aspires to be the *possessor* of clods of earth, with the stupid indolence by which another becomes *himself* a clod. The regret which would be felt by a man prosecuting some grand scheme of ambition for the loss of a day or an hour, if it were possible for him to have been betrayed into such a remissness, may justly command our admiration and reproach our indolence, while we reprobate his designs. And I often wonder when I hear the expressions of astonishment at the incessant exertions of that one man of the present age, who performs more within a given space of time than any other inhabitant of the earth, that the thought of this stupendous though depraved example does not sting and impel and mortify better men, in their humbler spheres, to try the utmost capacity of time in the enterprises of virtue and utility. How many men of talents, with some pretensions to virtue, and with a considerable scope for efficient activity before them, are absorbing their days in idle musings, or dissipating them in a trifling kind of social intercourse, or beguiling them away in the lightest kinds of literary entertainment, while they know, and often express their wonder that *he* is adjusting an immense complexity of concerns in the time that they perhaps give to needless sleep, or maturing a plan for the revolution of states and kingdoms in no longer a space than they are employing about a capricious

alteration of a garden-wall ; and that while they are making a few languid efforts at intervals, in the prosecution of some good design, he is executing his plans with a celerity which constantly reduces his enemies to the condition of the victims of lightning, who feel the stroke too soon to hear the sound.

In considering the measure of effort which an individual *can* make in a given period, one's thoughts are naturally led to the persons whose station and fame give a peculiar prominence to their assiduity in the employment of time. But a great number of examples might be found in the confined walks of life, of an activity not less vigilant and strenuous, though exerted in pursuits of much less notoriety, and with an effect much less obvious. There are, for example, many artists, under whose pencil, or chisel, or graver, the most beautiful forms and colours are almost as continually growing as those which they imitate are rising to maturity in the animal, and during spring in the vegetable kingdom. There may be some naturalists who make as many observations as Spallanzani, some mechanics who invent and try as many machines as Archimedes ; and possibly one or two students of law deserving to be accounted, for indefatigable industry, the rivals of Selden. And in the prosecution of plain, honest employments, there are multitudes of persons, who for the support of themselves and their families, persevere in their efforts, with very little intermission, from the dawn, or from before the dawn of each day,

till the latest, the very latest hour to which they can endure the fatigue, and perform such a number of distinct operations as could not be calculated at the end of the year without amazement.

§ 2. It has happened that literary men have left a more definable and permanent kind of proofs of the Capacity of Time than most other classes ; partly in consequence of the nature of studious employments, which, by precluding in a great measure any immediate co-operation of numbers, distinctly shews what an individual can perform alone, and partly in consequence of these men having put many of their labours into the palpable form of books, which remain unaltered in the hands of mankind, and of which we are able to conjecture how much industry was involved in the production. Some literary men, however, have been content for their ample studies to be displayed only in the records of others, as MAGLIABECCHI, a wonderful instance of what the space of human life may be compelled, if I may so express it, to contain, by a man who will not let a moment of it pass unemployed. In citing him in the present case as an example, it is not necessary to advert to his almost miraculous memory, except as a proof of the accurate attention with which he must have read all the volumes to every part of which he could promptly refer. The mere attentive *reading* of so vast a quantity, had he even forgot all he had read, is the achievement, which in the commencement would have appeared to defy the utmost la-

bours of the longest life. Let a young man be introduced into a library of many thousand volumes, a large proportion of them on abstruse and learned subjects, and also informed that every important book which should appear each year successively would be added to the mass. After looking round on this world of learning, what would he think if a patron were to advise him, or a tyrant were to order his confinement within those rooms and command him, to read through all those volumes? It would seem to him almost the same thing as to require him to clear and cultivate a wide wilderness, or dig away a mountain, with his own hands. Yet this, or something approaching to this, was done by Magliabecchi. He kept invariably to his work every day, and it may be reasonably doubted whether the course of Anson's ship would have been a longer line than that which would have been formed by computing into one all the lines that he had read when he ceased to read. In order to apprehend the full force of this calculation, let a man make the slight experiment of walking in his room, by the wall, just as slowly as he thinks would permit his reading so as distinctly to take the meaning of a line, supposed to be prolonged in moderately small print across the whole extent of the wall.

We might next mention the laborious writers, and above all the rest, CALMET, the celebrated author of the Dictionary of the Bible, who wrote as much at least as sixty quarto volumes, most of them

on subjects requiring immense reading and critical consideration. In very many instances the results of the reading of whole months were to be brought into a single page, and yet these pages multiplied under his hands to the amount of thousands in the course of a few years. I am far enough from thinking that this raising of heaps upon heaps of composition is the most excellent method of authorship, though some of this writer's works are of well-known and eminent value ; the thing to be admired is, that any mortal, after satisfying the claims of nature for sleep and other refreshment, and after disposing of those avocations and temporal concerns which must form at least a small part of the economy of every man's life, could find or make, between the two limits of his childhood and his death, hours enough for so much learning of languages, so much reading, so much collection and comparison, so much hard investigation, and so much composition. He must each month have dispatched a portion of literary work which no man would, in his advanced age, have been content to be called unlettered if he had accomplished in the whole space of his life. And on a view of the whole, we should be reduced to the state of mere wondering, without an attempt to comprehend the phenomenon, did we not know that there is a strange quality in time, in consequence of which the same period is of a contracted or spacious extent according to the habits of the

different men that spend it ; did we not know that a man who will, with systematic constancy, as if by a mechanical necessity, apply himself to his work absolutely every hour of every day of every year throughout his life, may accumulate a mass of results which an ordinary performer might have been forgiven in the dark ages for attributing in part to magic. There *is* a magic, of a very noble species, in this unintermitted perseverance. These remarks may be applied also to the literary labours of AQUINAS, BOYLE, CALVIN, DR. GILL, the late DR. PRIESTLEY, and very many other authors. Every one has heard of TOSTATUS, whose writings amounted to twenty-seven volumes in folio, who had notwithstanding to discharge the duties of some high civil offices, and died at the age of forty. The grand secret of raising these mighty piles and pyramids of work is explained in a great measure by the fact stated of D'ANVILLE, another workman of the same class, that he devoted to his studies fifteen hours a day for fifty years. How pleasantly D'Anville would have sympathized with the lazy complaints of even many sensible men, that their days and weeks afforded no *time* for doing anything. "Why, no, gentlemen," he might have answered, "*there is* no time, as you say ; for I have hardly been able in this whole week to read over again the Anabasis, with an attempt to ascertain on the map the successive marches and positions—to delineate the

entire marches of Alexander and Hannibal—and to examine half a volume of Cellarius's Geography of the Ancient World."

§ 3. One of the noblest proofs of the capacity of time was displayed in the life of BAXTER, whose exertions will be contemplated by a Christian with as much complacency in their tendency and object, as admiration of their magnitude. On viewing the collective mass of his writings, without any further knowledge of the man, the practicability of performing so much would have been scarcely brought within the comprehension of even very laborious students, by the supposition that he must have been a man of the firmest health, without official occupation, with uninterrupted leisure, free from vexatious events, in possession of a commodious place of retreat, and but little concerned in the transactions of society. What, then, would they think, when they were informed that Baxter had a most miserable bodily constitution, which continually oppressed him with pains and languor, compelled him to a habitual course of tiresome precautions and medical experiments, made it impossible for him to rise before seven o'clock in the morning, and repeatedly brought him to the verge of death? And what would be their amazement when it was added, that he preached, and prayed, and catechised, and visited the sick, as much as any of the illustrious apostles of those times; that he was removed to various situations, was hunted from one hiding place

to another, and passed many years in prison ; that he had to answer numberless casuistical questions relating to duty of individuals ; was applied to in almost all perplexities that involved the larger bodies of Christians in that afflictive age, and had to maintain many unprinted disputes which required extensive knowledge, labour and argument ; and, finally, that he had a wider acquaintance and correspondence than perhaps any other person, and managed as extensive a variety of negotiations and treaties between different parties of men as any contemporary statesman. This sublime example is so fatal to all the self-complacency which good men might be tempted to indulge on the strength of moderate efforts in the service of religion, that the modern annals of the Christian Church afford not a more powerful lesson of humility. If we had not thus seen what one man, and under such inauspicious circumstances, could accomplish, we might have deemed it just to applaud any associated ten men, who, taking the several departments, should, by their combined exertions, have performed what was performed by him alone. We might not have been fully aware what a spacious scope for thought and action there really *is* in a few years of time, when expanded to the utmost under the action of an energetic spirit. But having viewed this example, we are compelled to admit that it gives the true measure of the capacity of time, in relation at least to a mind of his degree of strength, and to plead a vast

and mortifying inferiority of ability, if we will not acknowledge a heavy charge of guilt, in the comparison with Baxter. No doubt he must have had a surprising facility in dispatching whatever he engaged in; but even this is in part an acquired power. When the mind feels as if placed under an absolute necessity of performing a given extraordinary measure of its work in a certain time, its powers will sometimes rise to a level with the necessity; and when a man has found that he *can* rise to so high a level, he will not, if he has important work before him, and urgent motives to the strenuous prosecution of it, be content often to sink below this highest level of his powers. He will, each succeeding day, emulate nothing subordinate to the best example which he has set himself in his former operations. This emulation will be often successful, and the constant repetition and prevalence of it will at length become habit; this habit will, after a while, make the prompt exertion which was arduous at first, seem but the natural movement of the mind; and when this has taken place, the talent is acquired of which the value will be found so signally great that it will be employed in all pursuits and transactions.

§ 4. The life of SIR WILLIAM JONES may be cited as another grand experiment on the capacity of time. The acquisitions and engagements of this illustrious scholar are so clearly exhibited, that we can form a moderately accurate idea of the quantity

of labour involved in each article of the long enumeration, and then casting up the whole into one account, we can divide this total by the number of years (suppose forty out of the forty-seven that he lived) during which he may be regarded in the character of a student. When this is done we shall be astonished to find what was accomplished in each of these years. According to this division it would probably appear that after allowing a number of years of his youth for the attainment of two ancient languages, he could not have spent on the average more than four or five months on each of the languages that he acquired, the whole number of which was more than twenty. But let any one who has tried, tell whether it is not an arduous work to acquire a new language, excepting a very few languages which have a close affinity with each other. A person surrounded with the literature of a great number of foreign and ancient languages which he does not understand, is in the point of labour in a situation somewhat like that of a man amidst a number of masses of various but invaluable treasure, each firmly secured in an invulnerable iron chest, and not one of which chests he can have the liberty or means of opening, till he has first made a journey or a voyage as far as that part of the earth from which this treasure came. This man should be obliged to go to South America and return in order to have the privilege of opening one chest and appropriating its contents, to India and back to open another, and

to China and back to open a third. Setting the *danger* attending these enterprises out of the question, and regarding merely the rate of progress and the time, I do not think this will be deemed an exaggerated comparison. How often we may suppose an India ship has happened to set sail from London about the time that a man has begun the study of a new language, and has arrived again long before he could deem himself a master or a proficient, though by no means ready to acknowledge that his application has been indolent. How many leagues of progress might be made by the voyager or the traveller in the time consumed in learning all the inflexions and transmutations of one irregular verb. It might easily strike the fancy of the student that he could travel on foot from Calais to Ispahan and back again, with a little aid of a boat at the Hellespont, quite as soon as acquire a reasonable mastery of the new language of which he has undertaken the study. Sir William had studied eight languages critically, acquired a competent knowledge of eight more, and a partial acquaintance with twelve others. Compounding as to this third class, between the number and the imperfect attainment, we may fairly say that he had learnt as much as twenty-four languages. And in having done this, we may consider him as having accomplished what required positively as much time as to have walked twenty-four times from Calais to Ispahan and back again.

But the attainment of all these languages was the

far smaller part of what Sir W. Jones performed and acquired. If we could suppose a literary man previous to the life of Sir William, to have indulged his fancy, during an interval of relaxation, in tracing the outlines of a romance, of which the hero should be a scholar, and the grand exploits and conquests should be those of learning and science ; and if, in pursuing his reverie, he had represented this hero acquiring twenty-four languages, as reading almost all the classical books of ancient and modern ages, as translating in his youth a Persian History, which few men in Europe could have understood, as writing learned commentaries on the Oriental Poetry, while employed notwithstanding as tutor to a young nobleman, and diverting occasionally from the school to the gymnasium for the advantage of athletic exercises and elegant personal accomplishments ; as prosecuting mathematical studies up to the elevation of the Principia ; as traversing the whole wilderness of law, in defiance of all its extent, its labyrinths, its pestilent bogs, its thorns, and its venomous reptiles ; as stretching his view over the entire compass of universal history ; as then going to India to enter into a situation involving great labour in the mere discharge of its official duties, but which he made only a central point to an immense sphere of other labours ; as investigating the complicated mass of Oriental philosophy, superstition, and legislation ; and recording so many of the results as to form a considerable number of large

volumes ;* as selecting from the chaos of Indian jurisprudence a multitude of unconnected fragments and particles, and digesting them into a system cemented and qualified by the principles of European legislation ; as travelling over a considerable extent of country, observing its inhabitants and natural productions, while the study of botany was combined with these observations, exploring, and sometimes by means of traces too slight or recondite to have been even perceived by a sagacity and comprehension less than his own, the generations and languages of Asia up towards the remotest antiquity ; as gradually clearing before him, to a wide extent, the night and dreams of the Eastern history, by means of stronger and more incessant rays than any mind had shot into that darkness before ; and finally, as closing this career at the premature age of forty-seven ; if our supposed literary man had thus conducted and thus terminated the achievements of his intellectual hero, he might well have said to himself at the conclusion : I have now vanquished all the writers of romance, and rivalled the fables of Hercules himself, by a hero whose labours of intellect shall always, after I have narrated them, be celebrated for transcending the performances of other men as far as those of Hercules surpassed the usual exploits of corporeal strength, and who has placed the pillars that mark the termination of his

* Not the Asiatic Researches ; but the collection of his own works, including the pieces in the Asiatic Researches.

progress at a point as remote from his outset in the regions of knowledge, as those of Hercules were distant from the commencement of his course of enterprise in the regions of geography. All this romance, however, Sir W. Jones was destined to realize. And it is to be regretted that we have not a minute record given by himself of his progress for a year, or a few months, to illustrate to us by a precise statement of the employments of each day, and of what those employments habitually effected, the practicability in detail of what in the assemblage appears so prodigious.

§ 5. Though the preceding examples have been dilated to such an extent, it would be inexcusable not to add one more, an example from a remoter age, and which will never be surpassed in the faculty and the virtue of improving time as long as ages shall continue to be numbered among men. The name of ALFRED, which instantly suggests everything sublime in human character, has a peculiar claim to be introduced in a representation of the capacity of time, on account of that specific mention which has been made of his method of dividing and applying it by the historians, at whom, however, one is indignant for having given so meagre an outline of his life. Their short imperfect relations and descriptions are but like small fragments of a colossus, or like the ruins of a once majestic temple where are seen only such vestiges of the foundation as to shew the magnitude of the plan,

with here and there a part of the walls and a few mutilated columns to intinate to the imagination the beauty and richness of the execution. Yet many of the particulars of Alfred's life are of so prominent a character, that the mind may do much to finish in its own imagination the comparatively vacant sketch of history. If we take the extraordinary fact that he commanded in person in fifty battles, though so little is mentioned of these conflicts, or of the circumstances which preceded and followed them, we can form some idea of the requisite measures for assembling men and giving them a certain measure of military order, of the dispositions for the safety of the feebler and more timid part of the population left in the districts from whence these men were drawn, of the cares and difficulties in providing subsistence for an army always in rapid motion, of the plans to be formed to enable bodies of troops at great distances from one another to operate in concert, of the methods for obtaining and communicating intelligence, of the efforts, the resources, and the eloquence often necessary to revive the spirit of a diminished, harassed, and sometimes defeated army, of the measures for retrieving the destructive errors or imprudence of subordinate chiefs, of the emergencies of the day of battle, of the cares of humanity for wounded and dying men, of the important dispositions relative to the results of victory or defeat, and, in short, of the incessant vigilance, intense thought, and every other kind of

strenuous exertion in the commander throughout the train, from the first moment of preparation and alarm, to the decision of the contest. Let it be considered how often these necessities of great exertion must have been repeated, and under every possible variety of circumstances in a life so military as to include fifty battles within the space of about thirty years. We may also form a tolerably just computation of that proportion of this period, into less than which such a measure of action could not have been compressed by the utmost exertion of the most powerful genius, even aided by the resources of an absolute monarch. Thus much time being occupied by the extreme activity demanded in a series of great enterprises, it might not have seemed so very unreasonable if the hero had surrendered the intervals in a great measure to repose. But we have some general information of what was done in those intervals. The whole condition of society, throughout his gradually enlarging kingdom, was transformed by a system of polity constructed, as all systems ought to be, on a grand scale of simple general principles, but operating, as few systems thus grand and comprehensive in theory are found to operate, with correctness and facility in all the detail. The conception and general arrangement of this system might have been an affair of a very short time to a genius like his ; but the adjustment of all the subordinate and practical institutions must have been the result of extensive observation and patient thought. How much time

it was, in the nature of things, that he must often have employed in devising the provisions of one single law or institution ; and then in watching its practical operation ; from which even Alfred would be occasionally condemned to see the necessity of revoking or altering what he had enacted, and, therefore, of exercising his invention once more for new provisions or a new enactment. Next to that of a great military commander, no office can allow less intermission of care and effort than that of a benevolent legislator, whose country and age compel him to frame his own system, and who is to consider every part and operation of it as in some measure in the nature of an experiment.

Alfred's residence, as we are informed, was but little stationary ; the duties of his government, besides the occasions of war, requiring a personal inspection of each province of his dominions. After adding this circumstance to the account of all that we have seen him performing, we may be allowed to give ourselves up to pure wonder, when and where he could find leisure and solitude for those studies which placed him in the first literary rank of that age, and produced twenty original and translated books.

There is another most prominent part of the economy of his employment of time, in which most of the distinguished monarchs, generals, and statesmen since his age, have deemed him egregiously wrong ; and I have no doubt, have often thought

and observed, with a mixture of compassion and contempt (even for Alfred!) how much more he might have done but for the superstition of devoting eight hours out of the twenty-four to the engagements of devotion. The corresponding portion of *their* time has been employed in plotting, intriguing, corrupting both their enemies and their friends, and in the whole system of vicious and timid expedients ; and it has not been within their capacity to conceive that any assistance could be gained to the undertakings of wisdom or enterprise, from habitual communications with the Almighty. But the very same incapacity attached to those former heathen chiefs whom Alfred surprised by his celerity, circumvented by his genius, or crushed by his valor. *They* too smiled, no doubt, at least in the earlier periods of their great contest with him, if they heard of the humble, the solemn and protracted devotions of the Christian commander, and they were most worthy to be imitated by the more accomplished pagans of Christian nations and later ages. If, however, these more modern chiefs of council or war could have preceded Alfred, the instruction of their example would have been altogether lost upon him, so long as he was conscious of deriving from this intercourse with the Divinity a feeling in reference to death more elevated than the mere contempt of it, a confirmed and unalterable trust in the assistance of Providence, a more animated passion to serve the people of whom he was the

sole human protector, an energy that at once quickened his invention and made him untired in action, an inflexibility of virtuous motive ; and finally, so long as each hour that he consecrated to the Deity seemed to be returned to him in the opportune events which obviated every cause of delay, in the unexpected facility of a movement or operation, in the quick recovery from the verge of death of an important officer, in the prevention of toilsome proceedings by a sudden change of the state of the elements ; in the protraction, by thick clouds, of the night which was to conceal an enterprise ; and in the important advantages, perhaps in some instances evidently arising from the adoption or the execution of a purpose having been suspended just so long as the hours occupied in prayer.

When an absolute monarch and a commander of armies is introduced in proof how much may be accomplished in a given time, it might be objected that this is not a fair example, since a man like this performs, by the exercise of his power over other men, infinitely more than could be or is effected by the individual himself. I have endeavoured to avoid this objection by pointing not so much to the *whole effect* of his strenuous activity as operating with the advantage of regal and military power, but to the immediate activity itself as exerted by the individual man while exercising that power. It can, for obvious reasons, be the lot of but one person in millions to produce so wide an effect in any possi-

ble improvement of time ; but the man who, in *any* virtuous pursuit, shall rival Alfred in the simple fact of occupying his time, will be a man of most extraordinary excellence. And as to the *effect* also, it has repeatedly occurred to me, while thinking of these signal instances, what a change would become manifest in human society in a few months, if all men in useful stations, though much below those of kings and generals, and less connected with knowledge and taste than the occupations of scholars, could be persuaded to place as high a value on their time in reference to their specific duties, and to their duty in general, as these extraordinary men placed on theirs.

If these examples have been properly displayed, they have left nothing necessary to be added concerning what I have termed *the Capacity of Time*.

CHAPTER III.

SWIFTNESS OF TIME.

§ 1.—THE IMAGINARY ANALOGY BETWEEN TIME AND MOTION: ILLUSTRATED BY THE RAYS OF LIGHT, METEORS, THE COURSE OF CLOUDS, A STREAM OF WATER.

§ 2.—ILLUSTRATION FROM THE PULSATION OF THE BLOOD.

§ 3.—ILLUSTRATIONS TAKEN FROM OBJECTS OF WHICH MOTION IS NOT THE DISTINGUISHING CIRCUMSTANCE; SUCH AS THE CHANGE OF THE SEASONS, ALTERATION IN THE APPEARANCE OF PERSONS FROM INFANCY TO MANHOOD AND OLD AGE, CHANGE IN INANIMATE OBJECTS.

§ 4.—THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.—THE NEW YEAR.

§ 1. LOCKE has shown that there is no real analogy between motion and time. But the figurative notion which applies to time the terms and images relative to motion, is become so intimately combined with all our reflections on the subject, and so familiarised in almost every language, as to have rendered itself, though it be an inaccurate, yet an almost unavoidable and indispensable mode of apprehension, and a moralist cannot need to make any apology for adopting and using it without reserve. An imaginary analogy with motion in general, and a reference to the various degrees of the swiftness of

motion as exemplified in the movements of particular bodies, would seem the easiest expedient for giving a striking idea of the successive portions of duration. The Author of nature Himself, as Locke has observed, has pressed this imaginary analogy on our minds, since He has divided our time into equal portions by means of the celestial phenomena resulting from motion. Taking advantage of this imaginary analogy, we may observe that the fleetness of time is equal to the most rapid movement of the swiftest body in the universe, whatever that may be, since a certain portion of time must elapse, or be consumed, during the shortest possible measure of the quickest possible motion. For example, if in one minute rays of light move 130,000,000 of miles, a certain portion of time elapses while those rays move one mile, while they move a foot, or an inch, and even while they move a thousandth part of an inch. There may, for anything we can know, be moving substances in existence, that pass more rapidly through measures of space than even light, though they cannot be revealed to our senses. A man could not be convicted of absurdity who should suppose that there may be intelligent agents in the universe invested with material vehicles of a quality so ethereal, and actuated by a force of spirit so stupendous, that their movement can leave sunbeams very far behind. Indeed the supposition is probable and rational ; because, first, it is absurd to suppose that in the infinity of what is unknown to us

there cannot be things in all respects superior to those within the narrow sphere of what we know, or therefore that there cannot be matter of far more exquisite subtilty than any modification of it which is perceptible to us ; and, secondly, it does not seem probable that the noblest spirits, whose economy of existence may retain some connexion with matter, should be denied the advantage of the noblest possible modifications of that matter, in the vehicles in which they are to maintain a transcendent activity, and to enjoy a felicity bearing some resemblance to that of God. But to whatever sublime excess we could raise our ideas of the rapidity of some of the movements possibly taking place in the universe, it would still be evident that, though the spaces in which these movements are made were divided into parts too small to be discerned asunder on a scale by the human eye, still a distinct point of time would coincide with the movement through each one of these indefinitely small measures of space. Time, therefore (reverting to our imaginary analogy), is as swift as that one motion, of whatever material agent it may be, which outflies all others within all space. And it may be of use sometimes, when our indolence forgets that time is rapid, or our impatience actually reproaches it with being slow, to direct our thoughts to these certain and these conjectured measures of the rate of its flight. Yet, though such ideas will tend to excite both a salutary wonder and alarm at the flight of time, these known and these supposed

velocities leave our thoughts so far behind, that we may often do well to turn to the instruction of greatly inferior illustrations. And there are many circumstances familiar to our observation in the economy of nature that have occasionally awakened reflections on the continual, the speedy and the irrevocable, lapse of time. Such reflections may have been suggested, for instance, by the rapid course and quick disappearance of a meteor. One of these transient fires has often started suddenly on our sight as if from nothing, and shot across a tract of the sky, leaving a momentary trace of light, glancing past star after star, expending its fleeting lustre, its first brilliance and its last, moving but to expire, and vanishing out of existence, while the eye is eagerly pursuing its flight, and vainly trying to seize the appearance at any fixed point. It might occur to a thoughtful mind that such, in many respects, is our time. It can never strike our attention but as in the act of passing. It is incessantly darting into annihilation with a haste more urgent than even the eagerest wishes of an atheist. It elapses with such inexpressible celerity, that no human and perhaps no angelic mind has quickness of thought enough to fix on a moment as present. Before the act of thought is perfected the moment is fled, and a long train of additional ones while the thought glances after it, and thousands more while the mind is wondering at the speed, and millions more while we are pensively considering that not one of them can ever return. And

thus considerable periods soon vanish into the eternal night of the past.

The course of clouds through the hemisphere, and of shadows over the plains and hills, has often been compared to the evanescence of human life, or, in other words, the quick departure of time. The clouds carried forward in the wind seem in haste to fly away with their treasures of moisture, that no mountain may attract them and no field absorb them. They are impatient of that part of space which they are traversing, and of that district of the earth which they transiently shade. If they are detached into smaller divisions as they go on, they all, notwithstanding, make the same haste away, and leave not a particle of mist behind. They both escape from our attention by passing away, and beguile it by changing their forms, and fading from their first colours as they retire. The eye is attracted from each by the new ones that crowd after it, and they are all in succession soon lost in the distance where they are still pursuing one another with the same restless flight. The shadows meet or overtake us on the plain, deepening for a few moments the verdure and the hues of the flowers, extinguishing the sparkle on the dewdrops and on the wings of insects, spreading darkness over the woods, but stealing away in the profoundest silence, with a speed which would defy the swiftest birds, and leaving us to be animated by the sunbeams, or to regret the departed softness of the shade the very instant after we have become

sensible of its involving us. More of these shades are coming at a distance, creating pleasing but momentary aspects of the landscape as they divide and diversify the gleams of light. By the time that we have glanced on these pictures at a distance the shades are here, and we have walked but a few paces further before we see them shading the brow of some remote hill which quickly resumes its first appearance from their being gone. The periods of our time elude us by a still more subtle power of escape ; in-somuch, that it is only occasionally that we are sensible or reminded of their departure, even while looking at this transit of shadows, which is a faint emblem of the more important fugitive. But when the recollection is suggested by the emblem thus exhibited in clouds and shades, we can reflect that in the constant succession of our time, one period has strangely beguiled us into the next, and the next (as in this train of clouds) has vanished almost as soon as we had begun to think of it as a new period ; and that days and nights, the literal gleams and shadows that pass over us in our sojourn on earth, as the visible signs and measures of our departing time, have fled away with such celerity and silence, that when we look back we almost wonder if it is possible that so many thousands of them are gone.

It is probable that men who can find "books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything," may often have been reminded of the speedy and incessant lapse of time by the sight of a

stream of water, whether a humble rill or a great river. We can easily imagine a thoughtful man slowly walking, or sitting down, on the bank of a stream and indulging his reflections in some such manner as this : "How perfectly indifferent it is, as to the movement of this water, whether *I* proceed or remain still, whether I move quickly or with a slow pace, whether I am here or elsewhere, whether I sleep or wake. If both mine and all human agency were awhile suspended, this stream would still flow on. It is so with my time ; wherever I am, and whether active or indolent, its lapse cannot be for a moment arrested or retarded. As this liquid element appears but one single substance, and I cannot distinguish it into separate portions by any sign of division or diversity of apparent quality, I almost forget the fact that I do not see the very *same* object for two moments together, and that I am now no more looking at that which I *was* looking at so lately, than if I had been suddenly transported from the banks of *this* stream to those of the Indus. The appearance and the sound are unaltered ; the eddies or dimples or foaming at particular points indicate no change ; the flowers, shrubs, and trees growing on the brink are still reflected in the same precise spot and manner ; and the rays of the sun or moon dance and sparkle on the surface as they did yesterday, or when I lingered and mused on this bank months or years since. But yet I know that what I saw yesterday is wandered far away, and that what

I saw months or years since, has been long mingled with the ocean. Thus also my time, presenting to me but one invariable idea, soothes my perceptions asleep, and precludes the recollection that it is of the very essence of Time to be changing faster than all other things of which we can form an idea, till I am admonished by some of those facts and changes in the scene around me, which are made the signs of the change of time. I observe that whatever irregularity there may be in the channel of this stream, whether as to its winding direction or any occasional separation into several branches, the current is still maintaining its incessant progress. The exact direction of the channel has been determined by the accidents of nature, and in some instances altered by the choice of man, but the stream moves by an eternal law. My time may at my choice, or according to the dictate of circumstances, be employed in different or changing engagements; but in whatever it is employed, it is equally passing with haste away. While considering that this current is flowing without a moment's pause, I am led to the reflection that a movement which does not seem very rapid, obtains much of the final *effect* of rapidity by being incessant. If this current proceeds on an average but two miles an hour throughout the entire length of its course, though I seem able as I walk along to leave this part of its waters, by a little effort, a great way behind, yet my utmost exertions in walking, suspended as they must be by

those long intervals of repose in which I should be recruiting my strength, but losing my race, would not enable me on a road along the bank to reach at the end of the week the place where that portion of the waters will be. And as to my time, if I did *not* consider its flight as actually swift, if I did *not* regard it as a succession of which millions of distinct portions elapse while I am performing one of the shortest of my engagements, but imposed on myself as to its actual celerity by considering it only in those larger portions of weeks, months, and years which would seem to move *comparatively* slow, yet even then, the *incessant* course of time, placed against the interrupted progress of my actions, would compel me to make prodigious efforts if I would render the collective pieces of the interrupted train anything like equal to the value of the continuous one.

My fancy at length suggests a circumstance in which all semblance of analogy is lost. I know that when the waters here passing by me shall approach the sea, they will be compelled to flow back a considerable distance in their channel, so that they will a number of times pass over the same space of their bed before they finally mingle with the deep. Not so in regard to the current of time : the ocean of Eternity has no tides to repel one moment back in its course.

Other reflections of similar tendency would be suggested if we sometimes recalled the consideration of time while we happen to be viewing the current of

brooks and rivers ; and I would recommend my readers to make a small effort to associate habitually some ideas of time with what is evidently one of the most pleasing appearances in the natural world.

§ 2. In addition to the preceding illustrations, I might notice the familiar circumstance of the pulsation of the blood. And I am assured of the pertinency of applying this circumstance as an admonition of the rapidity of time, from its having forcibly suggested that consideration to my own mind once in a very indolent hour, a number of years since, and often in subsequent seasons. It occurred to me that a number of times ten thousand, that at least fifty thousand of these actions of vitality had taken place during a day in which I had done absolutely nothing worth existing for. By a quick operation of thought, this very moderate calculation was expanded to a general guess at the number of these vital motions in the whole of past life, while each of them was acknowledged to have marked a distinct portion of time, and while conscience suggested that for the use of the much greater number of these portions I must be accountable. I was amazed to think what millions of millions of these portions had stolen away, even during waking hours and subsequently to the years of childhood, without exciting the slightest thought of their lapse, their value, or their use, while I had, notwithstanding, in my own person a natural memento and divider of time. If the whole succession in this immense enumeration

had been well occupied, it had been of little consequence whether the number and rapidity had been reflected on or not ; but it was most melancholy to feel that the inattention to the series had been also, as to a very large proportion, the waste of it. When I attempted to console myself by the idea that though the number of these wasted spaces was indeed enormous, yet each one was so diminutive that it might be justly regarded as of no value, another reflection precluded this consolation. It occurred to me that each of these repetitions of the pulse, involving a complicated agency and mechanism, might itself be deemed no inconsiderable operation ; and that during each one of the short spaces a countless number of other operations were also taking place, in the diversified parts and processes of the whole animal system. If, therefore, I attached any value or importance to the whole complexity of operations accomplished during each moment to preserve my material being, I must acknowledge the value and importance of those moments in each one of which, taken singly and exclusively, thousands of actions were thus caused to be performed for my sake. And it would be mortifying if the small pieces of time during which an important work is done by each of all those powers which are operating in the respective parts of the system, should be of *no* value for the agency of the being himself in whom all these powers are combined to give *one* grand power of action. It would be most mortify-

ing if, while the involuntary powers which constitute in part the human system, can perform an ample portion of useful labours, the voluntary powers of the creature so constituted and sustained have such a dull and feeble agency, as to require an extended period for the performance of an insignificant portion of his appropriate work. A man ought to perform in each part of his time, excepting what may fairly be surrendered to sleep, something at the least worthy of the whole sum of actions which have necessarily taken place in all the parts of his vital mechanism *during that time*.

While a consideration of the combined actions of the whole vital system may prove the *value* of each of the small measured divisions of time, nothing could be better adapted to intimate how fast these successive parts are presented to us and carried away, than this interesting little circumstance of a regularly and rapidly repeated motion so near the hand as to be familiarly obvious to our perceptions. I know of no other *natural* circumstance that divides time at once so distinctly and into such minute parts. The great system of the world does not afford divisions shorter than a day ; and the escape of time during the course of a day may not appear so very speedy to a man not reflecting on these small parts of which he ought to consider it as composed. Artificial timepieces, to indicate these parts, may not be always near ; this natural one is continually with us, and a thoughtful man who shall by a few repeti-

tions of deliberate reflection, have acquired the habit of regarding this natural circumstance in this instructive light, will be able to touch his conscience by touching his pulse. That conscience, so admonished, will assume at least sometimes a peremptory and efficacious tone, when he considers how much like infinite is the number of definable portions of time which this pulsation tells him he has already consumed ; when he considers that each of them has been marked with innocence or guilt—that it must require extreme vigilance to apply to any good use, as it is passing, what is so instantaneously gone—that while the pulse is rising against the finger it limits the departure even now and now again, of what was, when he placed the finger, just coming with a power of imparting a small portion of advantage, but can now impart no more ;—that when this pulsation finally stops, Time, in the familiar and restricted sense of the word, will also close ; that his whole allotment of time in this world is but equal to some given number of these successive motions : that he may be much nearer the termination than the commencement of the series ; and that, according to the words of a poet who was one of the noblest examples of the Improvement of Time,—

—“ Every beating pulse we tell,
Leaves but the number less.”

§ 3. Reflections on the rapid consumption of time are suggested by other things of which motion is

not the distinguishing circumstance ; as for instance, the change of the Seasons. In the earlier part of the year we notice and mention with a mixture of complacency and surprise at the end of a week, how much the days are lengthened since the end of the last. The season when they are longer seems gone before we have thought of it ; and towards the latter end of the year, notwithstanding our former experience, the encroachment of the night is so rapid as hardly to allow us time to accommodate our habits. There is not one of us that, about the time of the longest or shortest day, does not remark to those about him what a little while it seems since we were at the other extreme. In the spring, we have scarcely expressed our pleasure at the sight of one species of flowers before they have faded and given place to the next in the succession. And the several kinds follow one another with a haste that barely allows us to admire or to paint their beauties before they disappear, till at length we are at once delighted and mortified by the opening of the rose, the most charming, but one of the latest of the train. The corn shows its little blades while winter yet lingers over the land. We have pursued our employments or amusements but a little while, when we see it waving high in the wind, disclosing its ear, changing its color from green to yellow, cut down, and leaving nothing in sight but stubble. It may have happened to some of my readers, that while looking over a field beginning to appear a little green by

means of the tender blades of corn, they have thought of the general improvements of character, or of some particular attainments which they wished to make, and assured themselves they should have made inestimable acquisitions by the time that this corn should become ready for the reaper, but when that season has arrived have been confounded to reflect that all the weeks were passed almost before they had seriously begun the efforts indispensable for accomplishing their hopes.

Persons considerably advanced in years are reminded of the flight of time by the alterations apparent in the persons and objects with which they have been long acquainted. Without carrying their recollections further back than to the period when they had attained the maturity of life, they can place before them a familiar picture of the childhood of many of the persons around them, who now appear in the full growth and perhaps intelligence of manhood. While observing the tall stature, the athletic proportions, and the feats of strength of a young man, or the mature graces of a young woman, they often wonder how it can seem so short a time since they perhaps carried these very persons as helpless infants in their arms, or assisted their first efforts to walk round a room. This wonder may be so vivid at some particular moments as to remind them of the fable of Jason's men, that sprung up to immediate maturity and martial enterprise. And when, as it is found in some instances, they hear

these persons uttering the language of strong understanding, science, or eloquence, they feel as if almost a miracle had been wrought, while they recollect as distinctly as if it had been but a few weeks since, the first ridiculous, but yet pleasing, efforts of these very same creatures to articulate the names of the persons or utensils in the house. Is it possible, they are tempted to ask, that so much *time* has elapsed as to enable them in a regular and slow progress to make all these acquisitions, and to attain this expansion of their faculties? Can it be true that each one of this multitude of words, and each one of this apparently endless diversity of ideas, was a single and separate acquisition made in some distinct portion of time in which no other acquisition was made?

Aged persons feel another proof of the celerity of time, when, after what has been, according to arithmetic, a long succession of periods, but seems to their recollections but as one moderate or short period, they return to a place where they once resided and knew all the neighbouring inhabitants. They find the population so changed by the death of what they had known as the eldest class,—by the antiquated appearance of those who had just attained maturity, and by the maturity of those whom they had left in childhood, that they scarcely know one person throughout the place. It took a very great number of months to carry each of these classes so far away from its former situation; and an inconceivable

multiplicity of actions and incidents have taken place during the progress, and yet how soon all this seems to have been accomplished !

The altered state of inanimate objects may sometimes awaken in an old person the same reflection. For instance, he easily recalls the period, and even remembers the particular circumstances of the day, whether it was in rain or sunshine, whether in the morning or the evening, that he put into the earth the kernel or the slip which sprang up into a tree that now spreads its branches and foliage over his house, or over the green before it, or over the walk in his garden. And perhaps he well remembers when the house itself, or at least when other houses in the vicinity, and which he sees through the windows, were built ; and he recollects the once bright and fresh appearance of those walls on which the grey tint of time has long since settled.

§ 4. All of us probably that have attained the age and the habits of reflection, feel a degree of surprise at the close of each year. When it is going to be added to the venerable list of those that are departed, we do not find ourselves prepared to express the farewell. We seem to have a kind of right to detain it a little while longer, in order to gain from it that portion of its treasures of which it appears as if it must have defrauded us. We look back to its commencement, and to the projects and expectations with which we entered it, and are almost tempted to think that some fallacy of nature has beguiled

us, and that the phenomena of the seasons must have been chased away faster than ever before. Can the immense series of natural operations, we ask, which are necessarily involved in the completion of a year, have been all really performed, while we have accomplished so little? Why were the intimations of its flight at its successive periods so little impressive as to betray us to this surprise at its termination, and this sting of its departing reproaches? Or why were we appointed to inhabit a system where all things move with haste, as if on purpose to leave us behind?

In the new year we feel for a little while as in the company of a stranger; we have an uncouth sensation on observing the different numeral of the era, in periodical productions in literature, in public records, or in the letters of our friends, as well as in writing the date of our own. While this novelty lasts we again fancy the year in prospect an ample period, in which there will be space for doing great things, without beginning with any immediate urgency of haste. But by degrees we forget both the feelings of strangeness and the moral reflections, and let it glide on from equinox to equinox till it reaches its last month or week, and excites the same surprise, and the same regret, just when it is quitting us for ever.

To these various illustrations of the rapid consumption of time, I might add the fact, that the greater part of what most of us think of is something

past, but which was contemporary with one and another of the many days of our life. And every one of the vast number of circumstances on which the mind recollectively thinks or glances may remind us of this rapid consumption of time. For let it be considered, that all these circumstances took place in our experience in a train; that after the first of them a period of time elapsed before another was present to us, that a succeeding period expired before the third befell us, and so forward.

Now, if a countless multitude of these circumstances and events once present to us are, as our recollections testify, gone into the past, and each throughout the whole series, by means of the departure of a distinct portion of time, how rapid must be that progress which, in the course of our comparatively short experience, has carried away so many events, together with all their respective intervening periods!

These representations may tend, I should hope, to give a serious impression of that quality of time which we are obliged to denominate swiftness. They have been introduced only to enforce a general idea of the subject, and it is readily acknowledged that they do not furnish any precise rule for measuring action against duration. I know of no method by which these two can be shown in such a parallel with each other as to enable us to pronounce in the abstract what would be a quick succession of action. Quick and slow, as applied to action, are, after all,

terms as much relative to the powers of the agent as to the succession of duration. While, therefore, it will be of advantage for us sometimes to reanimate our apprehension of the lapse of time, by directing our thoughts to those certain or supposable modes of action in the universe, which have an incomparably quicker succession than our own, and in each minutest part of which succession a portion of time departs, and while we sometimes notice with the same view the rapid motions (or, in other words, successions of action) of objects familiar to us in the natural world, yet we must habitually adopt a humbler standard for measuring the speed of time. *Relatively to us*, the speed of time may be considered as exactly equal to the quickest series of actions, whether simply mental, or involving both the mental and corporeal faculties, which it is possible for our powers to perform. This is our standard ; and if any man on earth went through a train of any kind of operations absolutely as fast as he could, and absolutely during as great a part of every twenty-four hours as he could, without destroying and injuring himself, he might be said to proceed as fast as time, in the sense of *employing* it : and if all these were wise and good operations, he would proceed as fast, in the sense of *improving* it.

The standard fixed according to this moderate and applicable principle, will necessarily be very often referred to in the following parts of this Essay.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ULTIMATE OBJECT OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

- § 1.—ON THE HYPOTHESIS THAT THE EXISTENCE OF MAN TERMINATES AT DEATH, THERE IS NO OBJECT OF SUFFICIENT MAGNITUDE TO CALL FORTH THE COMBINED AND SEVERE EXERTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN REPRESENTED AS ESSENTIAL TO THE NOBLEST IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.
- § 2.—THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE, VIEWED IN RELATION TO A FUTURE LIFE, OR TO THE DENIAL OF IT.—PROGRESS IN KNOWLEDGE INCREASES THE SENSE OF MYSTERY.
- § 3.—EVILS RESULTING FROM INTENSE MENTAL APPLICATION.—FALSE NOTIONS OF THE DIGNITY OF MAN : WHAT IS THE DIGNITY WORTH ?
- § 4.—UNREASONABLE TO REQUIRE EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS OF VIRTUE, IF MAN BE NOT IMMORTAL.
- § 5.—THE LOVE OF FAME CONSIDERED AS A MOTIVE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.
- § 6.—THE PLEASURE OF ENLIGHTENING AND BENEFITING MANKIND NO ADEQUATE MOTIVE.
- § 7.—ADVICE TO A MAN ON THE SUPPOSITION THAT THERE IS NO FUTURE LIFE.
- § 8.—REFERENCE TO A FUTURE LIFE THE BASIS OF ALL JUST THINKING ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.
- § 9.—SUPPOSED OBJECTION AND REPLY.—THE RELATION BETWEEN A FUTURE STATE AND THE PROPER USE OF

TIME IS INDISSOLUBLE.—CHRISTIANITY HAS PLACED THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PRESENT STATE AND THE FUTURE IN THE CLEAREST LIGHT.—THE INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF RELIGIOUS FAITH.

- § 10.—EXPOSTULATION WITH A PROFESSED BELIEVER IN A FUTURE STATE.—THOUGH THE ECONOMIES ARE TWO, THE BEING IS BUT ONE.—THE DEGRADATION OF REJECTING THE CONSIDERATION OF A FUTURE LIFE, AND AN ENORMOUS DEFICIENCY OF A WISE SELF-LOVE.—PREPARATION FOR A FUTURE LIFE CANNOT BE MADE WITHOUT AN EARNEST PASSION FOR IT.
- § 11.—INCONSISTENCY OF A BELIEF IN A FUTURE LIFE WITH AN INDOLENT AND EASY SCHEME FOR THE PRESENT LIFE: THE CONTRADICTIONS AND ABSURDITIES OF SUCH A SCHEME.—CHRIST THE SUPREME MODEL.
- § 12.—THE FUTURE LIFE PRESENTED IN THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION WITH CIRCUMSTANCES OF UNRIVALLED IMPORTANCE; YET, ON THE SUPPOSITION THAT THE FUTURE WOULD BE ONLY TWO OR THREE TIMES THE LENGTH OF THE PRESENT, IT OUGHT TO EXERT A POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON OUR SCHEME OF LIFE.
- § 13.—PLEA THAT THIS CONSTANT REFERENCE TO THE FUTURE IS A DIFFICULT ATTAINMENT AND EXERCISE—THE IRRATIONALITY OF THIS PLEA EXPOSED.
- § 14.—THIS REFERENCE TO THE FUTURE AS THE ULTIMATE OBJECT DOES NOT INVOLVE AN ABANDONMENT OF THE COMMON PURSUITS OR INNOCENT PLEASURES OF LIFE.
- § 15.—WHEN PERSONS ARE AT LIBERTY TO CHOOSE THEIR PROFESSION OR BUSINESS IN LIFE, THE DECISION SHOULD BE MADE WITH A REGARD TO THE GREATEST MORAL ADVANTAGE.—ILL-JUDGED RETIREMENT OF NICHOLAS FERRAR FROM PUBLIC LIFE TO ASCETIC OB-

SECURITY.—IN ANY CASE COMPREHENSIVE SCHEMES BETTER THAN DIMINUTIVE ONES.—GREAT PRUDENCE REQUISITE IN THE SELECTION.

§ 1. AND here we must acknowledge, that if the close of the short period of time comprised between our birth and our death is to terminate our conscious existence, there is *no* ultimate object of a magnitude sufficient to claim that continued, and sometimes severe, exertion which I have intimated as essential to the noblest plan of improving time. On this hypothesis, no doubt, the same labours are required for the supply of the direct and pressing wants of animal nature as on the other; though the necessity is not so absolute: because it is not necessary to *live*. When constant and oppressive toils are become indispensable to support life, a being that cannot be hurt after its termination is foolish to retain it; at least, unless he has a very rational ground of hope that his condition is about to mend. The possession is nothing worth, the whole value of which must be constantly expended on the bare fact of *keeping* it a possession. As to moralising and philosophising to him about its being his duty to the community at large to retain the life which is oppressed and galled with such a load, he may well intermit his toils to laugh, notwithstanding what he suffers, at such folly. When and where, he may justly ask, will the community reward me? To what purpose is it, talking to me about a pre-

tended value which my life bears to the community, while that community practically disavows any such opinion ; for if it felt any value in my life and labours, would it not take some better care of me ? If the community is happy, I feel no advantage from it. But if, on the contrary, it is miserable like myself, and *therefore* can render me no assistance, while I also am too severely confined to my own share of labours and distresses to give either aid or compassion, then what is the use or obligation of my continuing in this partnership of wretchedness, when I can withdraw myself to endless repose, to which the rest can follow me as soon as they please ? Whether they will follow my example, or all join in execration of it, is not my concern. There is no law, for there is no power, to prevent my acting as an individual ; as an individual I have weighed all the good I find in my existence against the trouble of supporting it ; and as I find every hour to be a loss, but few hours more shall be added to the account. If there were some final positive good to be gained by protracting a life of oppressive toil, till the moment when debility and time would extinguish it ; if the patience of a slave might at last be elevated to the glory of a monarch, my fortitude would endure and persevere ; but to undergo these grievous labours one year, just in order to be permitted to undergo them also the next, does not consist with my notions of either wisdom or courage.

§ 2. Leaving the consideration of those heavy labours which a great proportion of mankind must undergo if they will live, we may remark on the pursuits of a more optional kind. With persons not rigorously confined to incessant toils for the mere support of life, an important part in the improvement of time would obviously be a strenuous exertion to acquire knowledge. And admitting that this short life is to be followed by a much more extended one, it may be wise to put the mind under the severest intellectual discipline, and to introduce it into the commencement of a train of inquiries which will extend forward to infinity. Together with habits of sanctity and devotion, it may reasonably be deemed an unspeakable advantage to have acquired, previously to being transferred to a new state of being and an ampler scene, a passion for truth, an insatiable curiosity, a patience and a vigour of investigation, and a contemplative enlargement that often sends forth "those thoughts that wander through eternity." But on the supposition that there is no life to come, this would appear to be almost all labour in vain. For, excluding this great prospect, it may be justly asked, *where* and *how* arises the signal advantage which ought to result from this vigour of discipline, and this indefatigable patience of exertion? As the whole of this advantage must be sought within such a limited and very narrow space, we can easily judge whether it is found or not. Is it, then, in the first place, that a

man can instantly place himself among the subjects of knowledge, and begin to take possession, without the cost of any tedious forms of introduction? No ; he must consume in all a number of years in the acquisition of mere signs ; in the irksome study of terms, languages, and dry elementary arrangements. Is it, that having thus fairly arrived within the boundary of the ample and diversified scene, he is certain to take a direction toward the richest part of it, and with the best guides? He may happen to be led by some casual circumstance, or to be attracted by some delusive appearance, to a department where his mind will exhaust its strength in endless toils, to reap nothing but a few vain or pernicious dogmas. He may be as if Adam, when "the world was all before him where to choose," had been deserted by "Providence his guide," and beguiled to wander into what is now Siberia.

Or if the man in quest of knowledge should have directed his view to a more valuable class of subjects, he may waste a great deal of labour and time, and be often tempted to renounce his purpose in disgust, through an unfortunate selection of instructors and guides. Is it, that, when after long deliberation and research he has adopted an opinion, he is certain that thus much at least (though it be indeed little as the consequence of such exertion) is absolutely gained, that this one point is unalterably decided? A little more extended acquaintance with things convinces him it was an error, and thus the

result of one course of diligent inquiry just answers the gratifying purpose of demolishing that of the preceding. So that several courses of labour produce but one result. He is like a potter who should shape a new vessel, not in addition to that which he had shaped just before, but by first reducing that former one to a mass of clay. Is it, that the labour of inquiry always avails to determinate *any* subject of opinion? Every man, long accustomed to intellectual researches, will confess and deplore that he has often spent whole days and weeks in assiduous thought and reading without attaining any satisfactory comprehension of the subject, or even an inferior branch of a subject which he was anxious to understand, or perhaps of a question of fact which he had determined to ascertain. Is it, that at the end of his inquiries he is ever less overwhelmed by the prevalence of mystery throughout the universe than he was at the beginning? He is much more overwhelmed; for not only he has been compelled to look to a wider extent around him on the dim immensity, but also in that small part on which his attention has been peculiarly fixed, he has discerned something far more recondite than himself or perhaps any man ever before suspected to be there. He had possibly imagined that two or three connected questions would reach the very ultimate principle of the subject; but he has found that the answer to the simplest question becomes itself another and more abstruse question, that the an-

swer to this second becomes instantly a third still more difficult, and thus the train of thought, becoming first abstruse and next profound, terminates at length in total mystery. He finds that this is true of every subject he can investigate, and he would find it true of every subject under heaven, if he could attempt the investigation of all. And again; the most indefatigable and veteran inquirer is aware, and often mortified to consider, that he is confined to a very diminutive portion, to incomparably less than even a thousandth part of even that superficial knowledge of things which the human faculties, such as they now are, *could* acquire, if the term of life could be extended. His utmost attainments are of less extent, perhaps, in proportion to the whole of what might have been made possible by a much longer duration of life, than one acre of ground, cleaned and cultivated by a North American planter, in comparison of the whole wilderness or continent.

I might, therefore, renew my interrogations, and say: Is it worth while for a man, expecting the extinction of his being after a few years, to enslave himself to the toils of study, under circumstances so inauspicious to his progress and his complacency? Will these exertions, that open his mind to more mortification than knowledge, tend to reconcile him to the condition of his being, relieve him from the consciousness of being a stranger and an outcast in the world which he inhabits? Will not the mystery which on the one hand veils an infinity from his

knowledge, and the imbecility which on the other disables him to apply most of what he does know effectually to the purpose of his happiness, excite the resentment of despair against that cruel fate which has given him just so much as to enable him to feel the misery of having and hoping no more? Why, I ask again, should he exhaust the whole energy of his soul, year after year, in the acquisition of knowledge? If he seeks the pleasure of admiring himself, is he wise to prosecute an employment in which he will be incessantly insulted with the proofs of his insignificance in the unnumbered worlds presented to his eye and his belief, while his proud intellect is defied by the impregnable mysteries of an atom? If, notwithstanding these humiliations, he can still entertain pride enough, on account of his intellectual acquirements, to despise the rest of mankind who have not made nor sought them, it may justly be asked if there is any advantage in such contempt. If his nature is made, like that of other creatures, to want society, but little is gained to his happiness by the pursuits or attainments which produce a contempt of those with whom he must, after all, associate, unless he can extirpate this great principle of his nature, and be content in total solitude. What immediate benefit of a real practical kind is he to secure at each single step of a laborious progress in knowledge? His labour ought to be repaid every day by some direct and palpable advantage, and therefore that kind of labour ought to be chosen

which *can* gain the quickest recompence. To look forward to remote results is in him ridiculous, not only because that distant time at which he calculates the result will be obtained may never be his, but because, even if it should, he ought nevertheless to seize the utmost possible gratification during *every* part of the transient period allotted to his existence. Let him occasionally apply to knowledge just so much as will gently amuse him, and employ the rest of his time in raising pines and melons, rather than accumulating a mass of useless information, erecting systems for other theorists to demolish, or vainly pursuing a number of subtle and fleeting abstractions, just as one has seen a dog chasing along the ground the shadows of a company of crows flying through the air.

§ 3. Intense application of mind may not only preclude many present advantages, derivable from what would be for *this* man a much wiser employment of his time, but also produce positive evils; particularly, it may injure his health, which is surely an absolute requisite to anything like felicity in the case of a man by whom languor and sickness must be felt as the omens and even the commencement of an eternal extinction of his being. In this state of debility, produced by severity of application, what a pitiable object he would be, on his hypothesis of approaching nonentity, in comparison of a ruddy, gay, and vigorous peasant of the same age, who perhaps cannot even read, but who can perform his task of

labour with perfect ease, relish his food, sleep soundly, laugh to hear of nervous tremours, share the hilarity and sports of the children and young people, bask in the sunshine when in an indolent mood, vault over walls and brooks when in a brisk one ; and never give himself one moment's trouble about books, ideas, or systems. Perhaps the man of learning and science would say, with real or affected contempt, that it is preposterous to degrade the *dignity* of his taste and pursuits into any comparison with so low an order of being. But I would ask him, what his dignity is worth in a sleepless night; during which this peasant* is sunk in the deepest repose—in the languor of the morning ; while the peasant springs up with the vigour of a wild horse—in the incapacity of enjoying the balmy breezes of spring ; while the peasant partakes the renovated animation of all nature—in the hesitation whether to surrender the day to the lassitude which has in it nothing soothing, or devote it again to the literary toils which are become so oppressive ; while the peasant goes with alacrity to his rural employment—in that fretful and fastidious disgust which he sometimes feels for all things and persons in the world ; while the peasant is pleased with himself, his neighbours, his fields, his cows, and everything that meets or occupies his attention—in that vexation, often caused by the unsuccessfulness of his

* This peasant must be supposed a happy specimen of his class, and not so oppressed by labour as many of them are.

labours ; while the peasant is delighted to see the growth of his plants, his corn, and his young cattle—or in that occasional dissolving of all his speculations and systems into a gloomy mist of doubt ; while the peasant never concerns himself about anything but what experience has made certain ? Separately, too, from this or any other comparison, what is that intellectual dignity worth, which is so soon to perish with the transient life of the creature that affects to wear it ? He talks of his dignity while he expects to become, in a short time, a small addition of particles to that mere mass of earth which is inferior to every organized body, and which will perhaps be sold by the rood, while the addition that he makes to the quantity will not increase the value more than a farthing—his dignity ! when all the powers of the operation of which he is so proud are soon to be reduced to the single power of supplying a little rank moisture to the nettles and night-shade that may grow around his grave, and harbour the spiders or the vipers, each one of which will then be a prince in the region of existence compared with him. He must talk of his dignity, when perhaps even now the tree is cutting down out of which his coffin is to be formed ; and the young trees which will soon sprout from its root will spread their verdure in the air, and be the resort of life and songs, when he will be an incomparably meaner thing in the creation than the fungus that flourishes at their feet. What sense has he gained by all his specula-

tions, if he does not yet know that nothing which is transient can be dignified ; and what consolation has he gained, if he does know it ? One has seen a bubble brilliantly reflect the sun, but to talk of the dignity of a bubble would reverse all our notions and language with a vengeance ! Even the sun himself would lose all his dignity, if we were, like some of the ignorant ancients, to consider him as a fire lighted up in the morning and put out at night. Transient operations and phenomena indeed may be dignified, when we know that the great agent remains with an endless power of repeating them ; as, for instance, lightning, since we knew that the living element remains to repeat those momentary lustres. It would be but little dignified, if we could know that the very element that produced it became annihilated in the concluding flash. Let this man, who boasts the dignity of intellectual employments and energies, look a little way forward to the gloom of that abyss which will soon swallow up (according to his own belief) both his splendour and his existence ; like the torch which, as I have read, is sometimes fixed on a floating substance, in order to be carried down a rapid stream running through a great cavern somewhere in France, and which after a little while acquires an accelerated motion, and soon disappears in the dark region from which a sullen sound, as of a torrent or cataract, is continually heard.

What is the dignity worth, which during every

hour that he is labouring to acquire it, and proudly exulting in it, he himself is, as one moment's reflection would remind him, carried forward with the utmost haste, under the cogent impulse of inevitable necessity to surrender a little while hence to his inexorable enemy—death? Where would be the glory of the crown to a monarch, who, being compelled to yield himself a captive, should be advancing towards the conqueror's camp to lay it down? Where is the good sense of this pride of knowledge, when one of the most natural and certain results of that knowledge, to the man who has no expectations beyond death, will be an exquisite timidity, arising from his being much better aware than other men of the infinite multitude of evils that environ him, and of the power which each of them possesses to destroy such a feeble thing as life? This timidity will probably be aided by that weakened state of his body which is often caused by intense habitual application. Where is the value of that dignity, which, when approaching the article of dissolution, he might rationally be glad to give for the privilege of being permitted to live in the state of a bird or fish, rather than sink into nothing, but which will be too trifling to obtain such a privilege? What is the value of that dignity, over which the most illiterate clown may, within a few months, most rationally exult in an infinite superiority?

This intellectual man may compass sea and land as a natural philosopher, with a vigilant and saga-

cious observation of all their diversified appearances, productions. and inhabitants. He may extend his researches, like Volney, from the valley of the Nile to that of the Ohio, and sketch theories of climates, of the formation of continents, and of the revolutions of nature during the lapse of unknown ages. He may, like Buffon, profoundly investigate, and eloquently illustrate, the chief laws of all the kingdoms of Nature. He may descend into mines, climb the summits of the loftiest mountains, or even be carried above the clouds, thus acquiring the rights of a citizen in each of the regions of the material world, and applying the experiments of art to all the qualities and powers of nature. Now he is elated into a magnificent being, for he has caught a glimpse of some of the hidden processes of the creation, has contemplated all the elements, and can talk of their combinations and their powers. He places himself as on a lofty eminence, and proclaims "Immortal Philosophy ;" "Eternal Science ;" and if he could live long enough, he would unfold all the mysteries of the globe. Yes, if he could live long enough ! But all this while, another process besides those which he has been investigating has been rapidly advancing towards its result, in the death, dissolution, and putrescence of his own structure, and the reduction of all its organs to dust. The fatal period will soon be at hand, and he will sink from his own importance like a dry leaf falling from a tree, like an icicle melting in the south wind, like a

pebble loosened from a steep declivity and instantly lost in the pit or the torrent at the bottom.

And the extinction of this diminutive though self-important creature will have no more effect on the majestic system of nature, the dignity of which he almost fancied himself to have acquired while he affected to explain it, than that of the smallest insect that passes its life on the leaf of a weed. When his being is reduced to a few dispersed atoms, mingled with the soil or scattered in the winds, the currents of the ocean, the streams of great rivers, the career of storms, the action of time on mountains and lakes, and the process of subterraneous fires will go on according to their eternal laws, just as if neither he nor his race had ever existed.

Or he may attempt to dissemble or beguile the meanness of his destiny in the dignity, as he will have it, of exhausting his strength and his few years in metaphysical speculation, where the severity of the toil will increase in the ratio of the increasing tenuity of the substances on which he is to work. He may prosecute his inquiries into the nature and essences of things, into that real and ultimate relation of them to one another, the demonstration of which would deserve to be called Truth, and into those profound abstractions in which he will lose all contact with reality, and feel as if he had been loosened from the globe, and were falling through empty and infinite space. The law of attraction may, however, still save him, and after something

like a lapse and alienation of mind, he finds himself on the globe, and among common things and beings again. But, still aspiring to the dignity of Philosophy, he resumes his labours, and resolves to make a toilsome journey round all the systems of all the philosophers, on his way to that non-existence to which he might have taken an easy and "primrose path." In the course of this successive examination, he must often be oppressed by the conviction that, if the subjects of his investigation are dignified, the powers of his mind are humble, since it is probable he will find what appeared truth while surveying the first of the metaphysical systems, will appear reversed as he enters on the next, and changed again as he inspects the third; while, by degrees, the cloud of scepticism will begin to settle and thicken over them all. But if he can adopt, with firm and unalterable conviction, one of these systems, or if from the survey of them in succession, or if from a profound intuition into the pure elements of the subject, as abstracted from all the systems, he can, towards the close of his period of thinking existence, form one of his own, where, after all, is the glory? Is it so grand a consummation to have seen, at length, the vision of Truth only to expire amidst its beams—to have obtained a revelation of the nature of ideas and of his mind, just when these ideas and that mind are about to become extinct—to have obtained the power of imparting wonders, to lose it in perpetual silence—to have seen a gleam thrown

across the intellectual world at the very hour that the shades of an eternal night are beginning to darken it?

Or, supposing his life to be spent in the study of history, and that on this account he assumes a tone of dignity, and feels profound contempt for the beings that pass their short allotment of time in profound ignorance of all past ages—I will again ask, *What is his dignity worth?*

§ 4. Neither, on the hypothesis which excludes a future state, can we reasonably require a man to improve his time by the unremitting efforts of extraordinary virtue. For as an existence of uncertain, but, at all events, of short duration, is all that he is to enjoy, he may surely be allowed to consider this little as all his own. If it is absolutely his own, he may employ his time and his faculties in whatever manner will contribute most to his own pleasure, subject to those limitations imposed by the mere laws of society, instituted by mankind to protect themselves against one another; and if he can elude or defy these, it will be foolish for him to forego any real advantage which they interdict, since there is no ulterior tribunal to condemn his temerity. If he is a man of sense, however, he will perceive that a certain partial attention to practical virtue will conduce more, on the whole account, to extend or at least to secure the scope of his pleasures, than the opposite conduct. This very partial kind of virtue he will therefore practise for the sake

of its aiding the plan of his gratification. But when he is required, for the sake of virtue itself, to make those extraordinary exertions which are both foreign and destructive to such a plan of enjoyment, he may justly scorn the requisition. And the point where he may and will begin to resist and despise the pretended claims of virtue, will be immensely below that lofty pitch exhibited in the grandest examples of a moral Improvement of Time. But his inclinations and his judgment will pronounce that he has done *enough*, when he has devoted to virtuous effort one-fifth, for instance, of the time that was devoted to such efforts by the Man of Ross ; this will leave him, therefore, a very large portion of time to be occupied as his inclination may determine. Suppose him to have a day entirely free from every engagement of necessary business, and to think in the morning about the method of spending it. He *might* undertake some patient labour, or perform some one signal act, of virtue. This may possibly occur to his thoughts. But he feels he shall please himself much better by appropriating it to some plan of mere amusement. Well, then, let him by all means choose this latter plan, *unless* the supposed virtuous undertaking will certainly and speedily bring him, in its consequences, some gratification so great that, placed against the labour, it will produce a balance of pleasure equal to that which would be found in the plan of amusement. We may suppose him to have another day which *might* be devoted to some exertions of ardu-

ous virtue ; but he prefers an interchange of perfect indolence and trivial reading. Let him again do what he likes the best. Another day may present again the same possibilities, and might press them on his conscience as *duties*, if a distant futurity promised to reward the effort and self-denial requisite for accomplishing them ; but as he has no such anticipations, he cannot reproach himself for indulging the inclination which leads him, in preference to these hard employments, to pass away the hours amidst the sprightly frivolities of a circle of gay associates. And we might imagine him spending, in perfect consistency with his principles, an indefinite number of days in a diversity of vanities gratifying to his taste, with the addition of just so much pleasant vice as will not ruin his worldly interests, his health, or that reputation, whether of a lower or a higher order, which he perceives it convenient to his interests to maintain in society. If he is told that virtue, even of the most arduous kind, is its own reward, he may reply, that with all due respect for the makers and the repeaters of moral maxims, he must be allowed, as to himself, to judge from the information of his own feelings, which have never told him any such thing. And if he is then admonished that this proves the very economy of his feelings to be perverted, and requires to be rectified in order to his pursuing wisely his own happiness, he may coolly answer, that he is thankful for all well-meant advice, but that he thinks he had per-

haps better leave the economy of his feelings as nature has adjusted it for him ; that he knows not the means, and doubts the possibility, of making any such transformation ; that all the time employed in the attempt would certainly be lost in respect of pleasure ; that if such change could be made in an instant it might, for what he knows, render him capable of fewer enjoyments than he is now ; and that death might arrive while he was sacrificing his immediate advantages to so strange and needless an experiment. He would assume the moralist in his turn, and observe, that in this short life time is too precious to be consumed in labours of painful cost and uncertain advantage, and that a wise man, at least on *his* system, should never surrender one chance of present happiness for the sake of abstract theories pointing to remote and dubious results. At the same time he will feel inexpressible contempt for the persons that, avowing the belief of a future state, pursue, notwithstanding, in practice, the very mode of life which he has adopted in clear consistency with his rejection of that belief. Do you presume, he would say, on a life protracted beyond all reach of imagination, and yet completely neglect to consider what habits you are acquiring ? Do you expect to give account of your time to a Supreme Judge, and yet refuse those arduous efforts to improve it without which you acknowledge you shall meet Him with shame ? Do you look forward to eternity, and yet in the confinement of practical

views, and eagerness to snatch any present gratification, surpass even *me*, who anticipate no existence beyond a few short years of time? Do you acknowledge that this very day may have infinite consequences as to your future destiny, and yet leave the mode of spending it to be directed by accident, fancy, indolence, or vain companions, like me who have a right to be content to trifle when trifling happens best to please me?

The wisest employment of time, therefore, I conclude, for a man whose prospects terminate at the dark and very near boundary of death, will hardly be found in the strenuous pursuit of knowledge or exercise of virtue. If, however, any man, with this short and dreary prospect before him, has, by some means, acquired such a taste, that, excluding still all regard to consequences, nothing can really gratify him so deeply as these hard exercises of intellect and virtue, he will do very right to please himself. And there may in fact have been some men whose inquisitive spirit, whose passion for knowledge, has become so powerful that the very pleasure of acquiring it, apart from all other considerations, has been the most exquisite pleasure of which they were capable. The passions of the miser or the voluptuary have not been more strong and constant. But I should question whether any man ever felt, exclusively of all reference to a future state, such a mighty passion for the labours of pure virtue, taking that term in its most extended sense, as to render it his

highest possible gratification to devote every hour to its exercises. If there should be so anomalous a creature, no one can object to his gratifying himself in his own singular way. No ; even Christians will have no objection ; though they would be certain to have this monster in morals triumphantly held forth in proof that virtue does not need the motives of Religion, by men who are, however, much too consistent with their creed to imitate this strange example.

§ 5. The love of fame may no doubt be a motive to the improvement of time, by such exertions in the acquirement of knowledge, and in the exercise of what, with a better principle, would have been virtue, as would never have been made purely for the pleasure of making them. And though it is a most hapless thing for a man to have become possessed by a passion which will subject him to as many plagues as ever harassed a poor demoniac, yet if he *is* possessed, and *cannot* exercise himself, he must even obey, must mortify other passions which have juster claims, and might have been more easily pleased, and wear out his life in the utmost labours to gratify that which will murmur at the deficiency of all he can obtain to please it. If the passion has obtained the dominion in his mind, it will be in vain to repeat to him the suggestions of common sense which have been reiterated a thousand times. It is of no use to remind him, that all people are too much concerned about their own fame to leave much room

for the celebration of his ; that there are countless millions all around him who will perhaps never hear his name, and would quickly forget it if they did ; that there are very few people in the world that would give one penny to save him from eternal oblivion ; that unless he can be the highest in fame, the degree of distinction which he may attain will only bring him in contrast with persons of greater fame, and that the relative contempt which he will thus incur from a comparison with those who are superior to him will be more mortifying (unless his thirst for glory is of a very humble and petty character) than the honor arising from a comparison with those inferior to him will be gratifying. It will be to no purpose to remind him that even should his claims on attention become ever so great and effectually enforced, yet men are soon tired of talking about one subject, if it has no immediate connexion with their own interests ; and that there is nothing so trivial or despicable, provided it be of a nature to become notorious, but it may compel him to concede his place in the public attention, since a succession of buffoons, players, and sportsmen, may be celebrated while he is forgottén. Nor will he with patience listen to the suggestions that if he will sustain the fame once acquired, the renewed exhibitions, which may after all fail of this effect, will cost him a toil too constant and severe to leave him leisure to enjoy what it is procuring ; that a ten times greater celebrity than he will ever attain could not

alleviate the corporeal suffering of, for instance, the toothache, or the gout; and that when struggling in the hour of death, which will soon arrive, his last emotion will be anger or contempt if any one should have the folly to attempt consoling him by representing what applauses men in different places may, at that same hour, be in the act of conferring on his name. As to the wish for posthumous fame, if he is actuated by this silliest of all the infatuations by which human reason is turned into ridicule, he will deserve to feel, in his last hour, the images of the grave and annihilation meeting him with such a frown as to banish the idea, or destroy the fascination, of this anticipated fame after death. He well deserves to feel the same kind of elation as that which would be felt by a man who should be on the point of being flung into the sea, and should be told that he might perhaps have the good fortune to sink to the bottom at one of those places where foundered ships have long since deposited "heaps of gold, and unvalued jewels" of which he might have the happiness of becoming the dead proprietor.

§ 6. After representing that the hope of fame is no rational motive, and that the attainment of it would be no competent reward of the assiduous improvement of time in the pursuit of knowledge and the exercise of virtue, it will be hardly necessary to notice the pretence of some men, denying a future state, that an adequate motive and recompence of such labours is the pleasure of enlightening and bene-

fiting mankind. It may, indeed, be advantageous to a man's immediate and palpable interests to take some pains to inform and influence those immediately around him, with whom he has to transact most of the business and spend most of the social hours of his life, since on their intelligence and dispositions his tranquillity or pleasure may very essentially depend. But further than this, it will be his wisdom to give himself as little concern about mankind as possible. *They* do not care for him, and why should he care for them? What gratitude can he expect from them for all his labours? Does he not see how the advocates of truth and reformation have commonly been rewarded, and is it impossible for him to be content till he has come in for a share of the odium and perhaps the persecution? And what strange *effect* does he presume that he shall produce by means of all his studies, his representations, and his practical schemes? The world will go on in its own way, he may depend upon it, and he may just as well go on in his. If he is resolved upon it, he may perhaps force the world to take notice of him for a moment, long enough, perhaps, to laugh at the bustle he is making, and to observe sarcastically that *he* of all men must set up for an authority in opinions and morals. And how fretted and angry he will be, when he finds that men are not at all sensible of their want of him, and are disposed to send him back to his obscurity, with the advice which I also would give him, to make himself happy in minding

his own concerns. Perhaps he may be surprised, too, as much as angry, to find that even men who do not seem practically to regard a judgment to come, are disposed, however, to place but little reliance on the pretensions to disinterestedness in a man who avows his disbelief of any such judgment. Let him, therefore, save himself all such useless vexation, and spend none of his anxieties and labours on an untractable and ungrateful world. What is it to him whether the inhabitants of that distant town, or of the districts beyond that ridge of hills, are good or wicked, happy or miserable? What would he be the better for it if they were all happy, if, at the same time, he were the victim of misery? And if they are wretched, or perhaps both wretched and vicious, how is he at once to relieve and mend them? If he suffers his little allotment of time, just enough perhaps to permit him to cultivate a few quiet pleasures for his own enjoyment, to be thus intruded on by the concerns and interests of all mankind, he will soon become either tired of his existence or abhorrent of his species. His life will be in the condition like that in which one has seen a garden invaded by a mob, breaking over the fences on every side in order to see some spectacle or snatch some plunder.

§ 7. On the whole, the most reasonable advice which could be given to a man concerning the improvement of time, on the supposition that there is no life after this, would be to the following effect: Let *ease* be always a chief object in your plan; for

unless you secure this, what advantage do you obtain by emancipating yourself from an opinion which imposes severe duties? Ease, both of mind and body, provided it do not degenerate into an excessive and sottish indulgence, will tend to protract the short period of your existence, on every extension of which, it may be presumed, you will set a considerable value. If your natural dispositions are active, endeavour to direct the activity into the line of amusement, rather than of enterprise, since enterprise may involve much danger, may precipitate or may harass your life into a premature termination, and may cause you an immense quantity of labour in vain; whereas amusements not immoderately pursued will exhilarate the spirits, will not make you wait for the pleasure they can impart, can readily be varied, and may be quitted when you are tired. It will be wise to keep your mental faculties a good part of your time very gently in play,—but beware of all profound researches, and perplexing arguments; the most agreeable exercise of your mind will be in the invention of little schemes of pleasure mixed with business; and there will be ample scope for the most pleasant exercise of your ingenuity in contriving a perpetual succession of these, and in giving to each a cast of novelty. Do not occupy in serious business of any kind, a larger portion of your time than is absolutely necessary for your easy subsistence. Never trouble yourself with calculations of what *might* have been done in so long a space of

time as you have lived, or what might be done by extreme and unremitted effort in the hours and days that you are now spending. Do not suffer yourself to be mortified by any comparison between yourself and the wonderful examples of literary and moral attainment occasionally obtruded on your attention ; on your principles, you have surely a right to compassionate the folly that so strangely sacrificed the enjoyment of time to a vain notion of its improvement. Fix it once positively in your mind that you are a much wiser man than any of them, and then the recollection of them will give you but little disturbance. To you no hour can be accounted lost which you pass away in a pleasant state of feeling, though it be marked by no effort of either intelligence or virtue. Attend just so much to knowledge and literature as will pleasantly diversify your employments, enable you to appear respectable in discussing the topics of the times, and save you from being a dull companion to your relatives and friends. Let your projects be all of a kind which a distant period is not indispensable to accomplish, but which will very quickly bring the benefit which they are intended to obtain. As your time is so uncertain, the produce from each of your labours ought to come as quickly as the grain springs up from the mud of the Nile on being sown after the inundation. Exercise, however, a competent foresight respecting your advancing age, though never in the way of contemplating death. If you were not born to possessions,

acquire, if you can, by an easy attention to business and a systematical moderation in expense, the means of support against the time that all cares of business should be laid aside. It will fortunately be serviceable to your interest every day during the progress of your life, to maintain with those around you, and those who are rising up to succeed you, the mildness of temper, and the habit of rendering ordinary services, which will preserve you from being despised and insulted when you shall be declining into old age. If you shall reach that period, the wisest occupation of your hours will be (if it should be practicable), a diversity of little harmless undertakings, involving such a gentle exercise of the decaying physical and mental faculties as may help to beguile both the languor of existence, and the dread of losing it, and amuse you into your final sleep.

§ 8. It would seem an obvious maxim that our time should be improved on a plan devised to bring the resulting advantage within such a scope that we may be certain to lose no material part of it, and yet on a plan which shall not fail to extend the advantage to the whole duration of our existence. Therefore, if this life is to comprise the whole duration of our conscious being, the improvement should be such that none of its results shall be delayed till after this being is ended ; and if our conscious duration is to be eternal, the improvement of time should be of such a nature that no part of that approaching endless series should be destitute of any advantage

which might be extended to it from this preliminary period. But that future life cannot derive all the advantage from the present which it would seem reasonable to suppose it might derive, unless the present is habitually considered in the precise view of a preparation and introduction. And, therefore, since that life deserves, on account of its magnitude, to derive the utmost advantage which is possible, the period of this life, with all the smaller periods of which it is composed, ought to be regarded and occupied chiefly with a reference to that subsequent continuance of our existence. If this is true, it must constitute the basis of all just thinking on the subject of the Improvement of Time, and must be always implied, and often expressly adverted to, in the course of the following pages. This must be the general and the primary principle of all the rules that may be suggested.

§ 9. May I not have cause to apprehend that some readers will deem this a much too solemn and religious principle? It may be said, Why must the subject be made so grave? Is it not possible to make some remarks on the modes and the impropriety of mispending Time, and to suggest good advice about employing it better, without introducing continually the appalling idea of Eternity? Why can there not be a lively and pleasant manner of showing the duties and the faults? and where is even the policy of introducing so formally a consideration which seems intended to push them both to the extreme?

I answer, that it does not depend on the will of the moralist, whether there shall be an indissoluble relation between the subject and the proper use of Time and the subject of a future state. This important relation exists without his leave or that of his readers; and all that depends on their will is, whether or not the recollection of it shall be frequently recalled. The recollection may be avoided or precluded, but the momentous fact remains the same. And while the fact remains, is it justice to ourselves and the subject to try or wish to avoid it? If we really entertain the firm assurance of an endless existence, it is beyond the power of absurdity to make a question whether this expectation should dictate the chief laws concerning the mode of employing our previous years. And is it not evident that, in a habitual endeavour to avoid thinking of this great prospect, we shall either fail to adopt those laws, or at least shall be perfectly insensible of their infinite cogency? But then it will be impossible that we should not fail to make that of improvement of our time which our final expectations imperiously require. It will follow that we shall not have accomplished a proper introduction for another, the sublimer, state of existence. And what will the consequence of this be? We may deplore if we will (a sublime species of regret!) that we should *be* immortal, because this subjects our time to such rigid laws of duty; but *being* so, we have no alternative with respect to those laws,

but that of either practically acknowledging them, or meeting what may follow from their neglect and violation. And if this be our situation, a work professing to take a comprehensive view of the Improvement of Time would be defective in its very essence, if its reasonings and rules did not explicitly refer and correspond to this state of things, which declares the supreme law and ultimate object of that improvement. Subordinate and incidental considerations ought to be allowed their value; but it would be foolish to dissemble or to forget that it is the expectation of a future life that supplies the principle which is both to dictate the form and constitute the authority of the principal arguments and rules to be advanced on the subject. An assemblage of moral precepts not concentrated in this supreme principle, would be as defective and probably as inefficient as an army in which every subaltern duly exercised his command, but which had no commander-in-chief. I know that much sensible advice has often been given in the way of prescribing such a partial improvement of time as should still consist with a plan of life not on the whole formed according to any high standard, or with reference to any grand ultimate object. A certain degree of application has been recommended, but recommended, it should seem, only as a respectable groundwork for a system of elegant folly. A considerable proportion of intellectual cultivation and attainment are indispensable to

fit out a finished man, or woman, of the world according to the most approved models, and therefore even Lord Chesterfield has given a number of excellent precepts relative to an economical distribution and use of time in the acquisition of the required qualification. Judicious advice on the same subject has also been given as a part of the discipline for creating the much more respectable character of the finished scholar, by preceptors who have not all the while ever adverted to any supreme and general moral purpose, to which all improvements and labours should be converging. As far as they go, and in relation to their specific design, these instructions are all very good ; and most of them deserve to be adopted into that more general scheme for the employment of time adjusted to the object of qualifying a reasonable and immortal being for its future destiny. But it cannot be too earnestly insisted on that a scheme of the economy of time which, in its parts and in the whole, disowns or forgets this high and comprehensive object, can only be fit, as a whole, for the regulation of a life spent in the assurance that no other life is to succeed. And if it is a scheme involving extreme exertion, I have already shown that it would be very unwisely adopted for the happy regulation of a life spent in *that* assurance.

It may seem strange to maintain so prolix an argument, on the plain proposition that the belief of our endless existence should be of the highest au-

thority to determine our economy of employing the present hours. It is still more strange, however, that any arguments of this kind should be necessary, and that the best arguments should generally be inefficacious. Extreme repugnance to suffer the usurpation of the thought of futurity beyond death over the pursuits of the present, is not overcome, in general, by the most positive conviction that we shall live in remote ages, and that the manner of our life there will be the result of the manner of our life now. Many persons, acknowledging this conviction, would, notwithstanding, accuse these pages of a gloomy fanaticism, and maintain that we cannot do better than accommodate our estimate and disposition of time merely to the order of things immediately around us, avoiding all such thoughts of futurity as would tend to disturb the ease and gaiety with which it is above all things desirable that our days should glide along. Now this might have been partly true, if our information concerning futurity were so exclusively confined to the mere fact that another life awaits us, as utterly to preclude all knowledge and all reasonable ground of conjecture concerning the economy of that future existence, the moral connexion between it and the present, and, therefore, the right mode of employing the present as introductory and preparatory to the succeeding; though even then one should wonder if the mind, though conscious of its invincible ignorance, were not often necessitated into deep and anxious reflec-

tion on inquiries respecting the sublime subject. But the case now is that Christianity has shown the moral connexion of the two states in the clearest light ; so that we can be as distinctly apprised what method of occupying this first period will most advantageously conduct us into the next, as we can what education will best qualify a man for any assigned profession, or what road will lead to any specified city. And therefore, either to disallow or to forget those sovereign claims of our future existence on our present scheme of life, which arise from this palpable connexion between them, indicates an unhappy and an extremely depraved state of mind. What fatuity would be universally attributed to the neglect of relations not more evident between many other causes and effects of infinitely less importance !

In this, as in many other departments of moral speculation, one is compelled to perceive the indispensable necessity of that religious faith which gives the mind a vivid apprehension of things unseen and to come. Without this, it is found by experience that the enunciation of propositions, nearly self-evident and of the most momentous significance that words were ever intended by Heaven to convey, produce little more effect than the chirp of grasshoppers. If the mind were but for five or ten minutes each day elevated to the utmost energy of thought of which it is capable in its relations with mortality, in anticipating its probable feelings when it shall find itself arrived in that state in which it

will soon in real fact arrive, and in estimating the magnitude of the consequences which will then have actually resulted from one plan of employing life, or which might have resulted from another, there would need no other admonition concerning the economy of time. And yet these ideas received in the moment of the greatest energy of thought, would be faint as moonbeams compared with those which will strike us when arriving at the great reality. But then, are not the ideas which we have reason to believe are the least unlike those which we are assured will dart like lightning on our minds when we arrive at that reality, the properest ideas for us to open our minds to now? And are we not, therefore, certain that those slight conceptions and impressions relative to this subject which are prevalent in society, and too often have been in our own minds, are delusive and pernicious? But then, is it not most foolish and wicked to let our plan of life correspond to the impressions which a moment's reflection tells us are infinitely unworthy of the subject, and for which a habit of serious reflection would substitute incomparably more emphatic ones, though still faint in comparison with the importance of the reality?

A serious and Christian observer often feels a wish that he were allowed to bring each of the persons in the societies in which he has occasionally to mingle to the absolute question whether they believe in a future state or not. Those who should avow the negative, he might perhaps fairly consider

as without the jurisdiction of his arguments and persuasions. If some others professed to be in an equipoise of doubt, he might justly tell them they deserved to have their names proclaimed all over the world as among the most ridiculous creatures in it, or that ever were in it, if they did not most earnestly devote the very first portion of their time to the decision of the question, and every subsequent portion that could possibly be wrested from the most urgent occupations, till it should be decided. If they declared their firm belief of the doctrine, he would feel himself entitled to reason with them on the ground which they thus deliberately assumed. He would suggest that surely this most momentous and magnificent idea cannot be admitted into the mind as one in the train of ordinary thoughts to be dwelt on a few moments with comparative indifference, and then carried away in the transient course of ideas, till accident recall it. How can you, he might ask, avoid feeling a penetrating and solemn influence accompanying this thought whenever it is presented to you, somewhat like that which was felt in the presence of ancient prophets, and often made impressions which days and incidents and new visitants could not erase? The very consciousness that your minds have been capable of admitting and dismissing this subject without a prolonged and serious emotion, ought to produce at last that seriousness, by means of wonder and alarm, which may well be awakened by the consideration how many years you

have believed this truth in vain. To an enlightened mind it would be a mournful thing to look back on one day with the full consciousness that it has been lost, as having contributed in no degree to the grand purpose for which all our days were given. What sentiment, then, ought to arise at the remembrance of perhaps several thousand days thus lost, notwithstanding our knowledge of that great truth under the right influence of which they would have been saved?

§ 10. But to come to the present time. You will not deny that it may justly be required of you as possessing reason that you should exert, on at least two or three subjects, the utmost force of that reason, and not for a moment only, but long enough to adopt deliberate and matured conclusions. You must else be understood to entertain the modest opinion that you are possessed of reasoning powers so vast that much less than their full exertion is competent to decide the most important questions that can be presented to claim the attention of a rational being. One of these subjects you will acknowledge to be, the consideration of the manner in which your belief of a future life ought to operate on your present scheme or habit of occupying time. Now, have you, in plain, honest truth, made this indispensable exertion, and with this indispensable patience of deliberation? If you have *not*, you acknowledge there is one grand duty immediately before you, requiring, for a while to come, the most

strenuous effort of your thoughts, and, therefore, Improvement of your Time ; a duty which you cannot neglect or defer without being both contemptible and criminal. If you *have* made this rational effort of thought, *what is your judgment?*

If you have begun this train of serious thought with a wish to find the claims of hereafter on the present *less* absolute, imperious, comprehensive, and all-grasping than serious men commonly represent, have you succeeded? After attending to what Revelation has declared, and the obvious nature of things, have you concluded that the connexion between these two is so slight as to make them appear two separate economies, so parted as to have no claim to interfere with each other? I am persuaded you have not. You have still seen that, though the economies are two, the *being* is but one, and will by this unchangeable identity preserve an uninterrupted connexion between all that precedes and all that follows. While you have been fixing your thoughts on that grand futurity,—instead of receding, as you continued to contemplate, further and further from all interference with the present time, and yielding it up to the claims of vanity, passion, and accident, has it not, on the contrary, seemed to advance every moment nearer, to disclose a more and more majestic importance, and to assume, in the name of God, an unlimited right over the occupation of the present period? Under the impression of this view, did you not feel astonishment and regret, that you had

wasted so much of your life from having been so little aware of the purpose for which you held it? And did you not, in such moments, feel a lucidness and intellectual clearness of thought which precluded every surmise of your feelings being those of fanaticism? while you have said earnestly, Let me always see in this manner my relations with futurity, for I am certain I shall cease to apprehend justly and act nobly if these ideas shall be lost. And *have* you lost them, and now think yourself more rational when they are departed? And do you feel perfectly safe in persevering in that slight and negligent system which you then emphatically condemned and deplored? What kind of arguments besides are you furnished with against the possible recurrence of such impressions and reflections? Is it not even possible that these solemn ideas which you have not wished to retain may return in the hour of death? And you may be assured it will be extremely difficult then to persuade yourself that a lighter order of notions was more correct than these gravest ones, with the force of evidence with which they may be accompanied at that final season. I may surely be allowed to entreat you to reason so carefully on the question in what manner the expectation of futurity should operate on your present habits of employing time, that you shall be soberly certain that the approach of the reality will not change your views and terrify your latest hours. Consider that it were a glaring disorder in the cre-

ation, if a being to whom is given the foresight of ultimate prospects, had not also an ultimate object of his pursuits appointed. And it were monstrous if that object were not made to refer to and combine with those prospects ; but the whole system of its activity were so insulated as to include and terminate within itself all the objects, results, and consequences, thus leaving the rational creature to enter the second stage of existence just without the smallest advantage from the preceding one. But if such an entire separation of what precedes from all relation or connection with what follows, would be a thing contrary to the order of the universe, it is a contempt of Him who has appointed these relations for the rational creature itself to make practically such a disconnection.

Consider again, that if there were several distinct objects out of which a rational being should be required to select one for its leading object, to be kept constantly in view through the whole system of its occupations, the one selected ought in all good sense to be that which is more dignified than all others. The most dignified beyond all comparison is this view to a future life. Therefore, a man wretchedly degrades himself, if he can reject this object and reduce himself to be content with one infinitely inferior.

Consider, that if no positive evil were threatened to the neglect of this sublime object, yet it would be an enormous dereliction of wise self-love, in a

being that sees in numberless points how his present plan of life might be adapted to prepare him for the noblest state in futurity, to forego this advantage for the sake of a momentary good, or from mere indolence. One should think it ought to be the highest gratification to find how much, and in how many ways, the present may be made to bear on the happiness of futurity, since that happiness is thus brought within our grasp, and each earnest effort may secure its being greater for such effort. And it would evince a very melancholy state of mind if a man could say, I am sorry that it is possible my pursuits might this day be of such a nature, and prosecuted with such views, that they should produce a happy effect on my future state ; I am sorry, because I am disposed to occupy the day in a manner which I am aware can contribute nothing to the advantage of that state. But let it be remembered that, next to this wretched perversity, is that of being, day after day, too careless to *think* of this possible effect of the present time on ages yet to come.

A devout and benevolent spectator, while surveying so many examples of this deliberate and of this thoughtless disregard of all the claims of futurity upon the present scheme of life and action, is tempted to be sorry that there *should* be a future life awaiting any but those who are anxious to be prepared for it. With regard to the self-complacency of the persons, it does not seem necessary ; since

their exclusive interest about the present course of things would hardly permit the consciousness that any interesting subject of contemplation was lost to them, if they were now to cease to believe in a future existence. And if there were no such thing awaiting them, all that could be feared for them would be confined to the short period of this life.

Though it would be absurd to represent that everything we do and pursue in the present life, is to be expressly chosen and pursued for the sake of preparing for the future, yet no man will be able to do all that this preparation requires without extending the recollection of this great interest into everything he attends to or pursues. For this preparation cannot be made without an earnest passion to make it ; and this passion will prompt a great many efforts and employments distinctly in express relation to this object. But a passion strong enough to prompt all these specific labours of preparation, cannot, in its very nature, be confined exclusively to these ; it will extend itself in some degree to all the employments which are pursued from the necessities of the economy of the present life. And also, through certain allotted portions of time will be appropriated, more distinctly, and specifically, to the peculiar exercises of this preparation, yet it will be felt that a concern which belongs to our time in this world taken as a whole, must belong, in some degree, to every part.

And we shall not need permission to ask, whether

this habitual reference to the sublime prospect of futurity will not produce an incomparably nobler state of mind and style of life than can exist in its absence. Will not a man feel far deeper interest in his successive occupations when, in addition to the pleasure or the utility which may accompany many of them, he anticipates results which will take place after the globe has been consumed, than if they were merely the transient affairs of a day? Will it not be a high and enviable distinction over other men that the same undertakings in which they engage, for the advantage of a year or even sometimes for the amusement of a day, are entered upon by him with calculations which, without renouncing the temporary advantage, extend themselves towards infinity? We always feel a commanding dignity in the man, if his designs are not of a malignant order, who, in mingling in common concerns with other men, is revolving in his mind far deeper objects; and who sometimes quits their society to employ himself in the specific operations which relate and tend to those greater objects. What would a wise contemporary have thought of Alfred as compared with those around him, if he had recognised him in the garb of a cowherd, mingling with peasants in rustic occupations, and if he could have attended the employments, and known the thoughts of his midnight hours? or of Gustavus Vasa, while forming and pursuing his projects amidst the labours of the mine? or of the Czar Peter, employed, without in-

deed any attempt to conceal himself, in the operations of the forge?

§ 11. The *dignity* of a plan thus formed upon the belief of a future life will not be attempted to be denied, as the denial would be obviously ridiculous. It would betray an utter defect even of *taste* to deny that such a plan is most sublime. But dignity and sublimity are far enough from being the most attractive qualities to mankind in general; even setting aside that difficulty of approach which very often characterises the objects distinguished by these high qualities. When, therefore, we give warning of the arduous effort involved in this plan, there can be no wonder if it appear formidable for the rigour of its practical rules. But I may be allowed very confidently again to ask, How is it possible for the moralist to help this, and whether he could propose a system of more indolent principles without contradicting the very consciences of those who object? Which of them all would not despise his inconsistency, if, after representing the grandeur and the solemnity of the prospect of an endless existence, to the grandeur of which prospect no possible combinations of human thought or language can do even the lowest degree of justice; and if, after next insisting, according to the dictates of Revelation and the evident connexion of the first stage of a conscious existence and the succeeding, that since the habits and the actions of the introductory part will produce their result in the sequel, they ought

to be formed expressly with a view to secure the noblest result in that sequel—he should finally maintain, and even infer, that a very easy and indolent scheme of life is all that this state of things imposes on us. How would their contempt labour for emphatical expressions, as he brought this inference into its most direct simplicity of form, and into successive particulars in such a manner as this : The respective stages of our present life do not follow one another in a stricter relation and connexion of interests than that in which another and an endless life will succeed to the present; therefore nothing can be more needless than to extend our contemplations and cares to our concerns at a remote period. The elevation or depression, the felicity or woe, of that future being depends on the manner in which we shall in the present life be prepared to enter it; therefore, all solemn anxiety to accomplish the best preparation during this season which is rapidly carrying toward that entrance, is a fanatical excess of foresight and seriousness. This year or month may finish the period; therefore, wisdom dictates a gay and easy mode of passing it. Every zealous effort in the cultivation of true wisdom and goodness, will have its reward, and that reward will be prolonged to infinity; therefore, I dissuade from the systematic vigilance and self-denial requisite to make such efforts habitual. This very day or hour you may accomplish a service to the supreme Master, of which the distinct result in the future ages and millenniums of

your life may be a measure of happiness incomparably exceeding the whole sum of happiness that was ever enjoyed within the longest life on earth ; therefore, by all means, surrender the day or hour to any other use that is not absolutely vicious. By the refusal of such efforts you will lose a thousand happy results, a thousand perennial fountains of the paradise of Eternity ; therefore refuse them ! The frequent solemn thought of futurity would imperiously force you into a practical system much more specifically adjusted to this prospect than the system generally adopted around you ; therefore, beware of subjecting yourself to this rigour of conviction, and this necessity of becoming singular. Such a kind of distinctness from the general habits of men, may indeed be enjoined by Him who has made us immortal, but do not let that influence your conduct ; you must yield to the claims of men and custom here ; you will have time enough hereafter to meet the consequences of having slighted *His* claims. The solemn consideration of futurity might undoubtedly inspire you with such principles, such designs, and such ardour, as would exalt you to the noblest rank of human beings ; but it cannot be worth your while to dwell on such a gloomy subject, and be fired with such a restless ambition for the sake of attaining that rank, or of indulging and finally realizing its magnificent expectations. Men who are ambitious of extended territories, or of extraordinary perfection in an art or a profession, or of a wide personal

observation of whatever is rare or curious on the globe, or even of the accomplishments of a finished gentleman, make indefatigable exertions and often painful sacrifices, and you respect the consistency with which a man practically follows up his conviction that, if he will attain this object, he must pay this price. An equally systematical and habitual employment of means to the end, might well be supposed not less indispensable to the design of making conquests in another world, and becoming qualified for the society of immortals. Yet do not suffer this great object to acquire such a predominance in your thoughts as to harass your conscience in each indolent or dissipated hour with monitions that you are living in vain, when you are not prosecuting the design of seizing at last, wherever it may be, the noblest region in the universe.

But it were endless to enumerate all the contradictions and absurdities which must be admitted as the dictates of sound sense, until it is acknowledged that the Christian prospects beyond death are, with regard to all the believers in them, of such pressing and transcendent importance, that the operations of absolutely every day ought to be most accurately directed to the ultimate attainment of the very noblest thing which those prospects have disclosed. This, beyond all doubt, has been the principle and the plan of men whose names defy all competition and comparison, on the ground of moral excellence and sublime devotion, and acknowledge nothing

superior in talent within the whole history of the world ; not to refer to those men who were selected to follow and to resemble the only PERSON to whose excellence it was impossible for anything to be added. The standard of that character, which it is the happiest and the most elevated consummation for human beings to acquire, must be one and invariable. The most eminent Christians, unless all virtue and religion are a dream, have been the best specimens of this character. If some other model of subordinate quality (for subordinate it *must* be) is substituted for the gay, the fashionable, the indolent, or the philosophic, they who prefer it and conform to it are to abide the consequences. Any other model of perfect qualities than that which has been delineated by the hand of Divinity, can obtain from a firm adorer of Christianity only the same kind of attention and respect as he would pay to a statute of Jupiter, if it were exhibited as a god. His conception of a perfect human being will be obstinately fixed to one defined form ; devotion will be the reigning principle, and the assemblage of qualities of which this is to be the animating soul, must be such as perfectly harmonise with devotion, and no other. He is far enough from needing to be reminded that the best discipline and exertions will leave a man still greatly below this ideal perfection ; but he cannot admit that because the best practical execution will fall short of the idea which is regarded as the model, the model itself shall be lowered from

absolute perfection to something else and something less; no more than an artist, because he cannot equal the works of nature, shall be, therefore, allowed to maintain, that the standard of absolute excellence is to be sought in something *less* excellent than nature. The enlightened and zealous cultivator of moral excellence will not wish the ideal type at which he is required to aim were of less elevation, or composed of other qualities than that which the Divine authority has fixed. But no man will prosecute the unremitting exertion to resemble it, but he that habitually looks forward to another life, both as "*the recompense of the reward*" and as the state for which this previous scheme of conduct is to adapt and qualify his character. And, therefore, I would repeat, that in the course of remarking in detail on the various modes of improving and wasting Time, I must assume the right of adverting frequently to this ultimate object.

§ 12. It would be irrational to require this commanding predominance of the interests of the future amidst the employments of the present, if that future did not present itself to us with so many circumstances of unrivalled importance. If the course of nature and facts did not warn us of the certainty of its arriving comparatively very soon; if Revelation (of which I constantly assume the truth) did not unveil it from darkness in the character of a retribution, an enlarged being, and an everlasting duration of that being, it would not be strange if we

sometimes felt it of the nature of an usurpation, if what was incalculably remote, indistinct, and of uncertain continuance, and existing as yet but merely in idea, demanded to influence every part of our present economy of feeling and action, in precedence to the pressing interests of the immediate realities which belong to the present time itself. These immediate concerns might, perhaps, be almost permitted to rise and vindicate their rights and their own portion of Time against the visionary invader. But when the supposed state of things in which this re-action and competition might have taken place, instantly vanishes at the revelations of religion, the reasons which might have authorised or extenuated the absorption of thought in immediate interests, vanishes also. Yet what would have been, notwithstanding, regarded as a duty by the most prudent men, even in that supposed state of things, might be alleged to enforce the more palpable duty of men who feel themselves placed in a far different situation. We may make the supposition, that, instead of what Christianity foreshews, we had been under such an order of things as to have good reason to expect the continuance after this life of our conscious being, for a term just as long as the duration, or, say two or three times as long as the duration of this life, but positively no longer than such assigned term. Let the ground for expecting this portion of future existence be quite as good, or even be much better, than that on which a youth may assure himself of

living through the stage of manhood, or a person in this maturer stage of living to advanced years. On this poor and limited supposition, it would nevertheless have been a dereliction of good sense not to have adopted a system of equal care and providence throughout the first sixty or seventy years with relation to the seventy or the hundred and forty years to follow, as that which is indispensable to be adopted in youth for securing the interests of manhood, and in manhood for securing the accommodations needful to declining life. And in the mind of every wise individual, these cares of foresight at each stage have almost as much influence on his plans and exertions as the immediate interests of the day. How many toils and self-denials are supported in each preceding period, for the sake of the next, and the last. We all applaud this system of adjusting the earlier pursuits of life to its later interests as much as the present. But then what terms descriptive of folly and insanity may not justly be applied to that man who feels no solicitude to dispose his plan in whole and in part to have the happiest effect on that grand prolongation of his being, and is disgusted with the seriousness that urges this solicitude upon him as the supreme duty of his life?

§ 13. It will be pleaded that the constitution of our nature renders this habit an attainment and an exercise of great difficulty. As far as this difficulty arises essentially from our constitution, it is a subject for sorrow; as far as it is the consequence of

neglecting all thoughtful discipline of our minds, it is a subject for shame and immediate indignant self-correction. But if it *is* difficult, what then? Whither does this plea tend? For the objection amounts exactly but to this, that it is difficult to obtain eternal felicity. And is it possible that a man can seriously endeavour from this difficulty to reason himself into a contentment to lose it? There cannot well be a more melancholy omen than the disposition to derive and to authorise an indifference concerning a stupendous evil, from the very circumstance that the danger of incurring it is great. The symptom is of the nature of that fatal and obstinate propensity to lie down and sleep, which comes on a person who is in danger of perishing in the snow. When the good or evil presented in prospect is of incomparable magnitude, a reflective start of terror ought to rouse the mind at the first distinct consciousness of being willing to fail of that good, and to sink under that evil, because then there will be the consolation of recollecting that it would have required a laborious contest against a perversity of disposition to have attained the one and escaped the other. If this will not, as then recollected, be a consolation for loss, it is madness to let it now operate as a prevention of gain. If it is admitted that this can be *no* consolation, what *other* consolation is expected in that supposed melancholy event? If a man calmly says he cannot persuade himself to take the trouble of looking forward far

enough to consider how he is to meet distant consequences, we may justly ask whether it is possible to conceive that any blast on intellect more direful than this can have smitten any thinking being in the creation? Unless men can be persuaded to follow things to their obvious, though distant results, it is desperate to reason with them on Christian or any other principles. And it is most melancholy that there should *be* any remote results awaiting them, since they are willing to hazard the worst, rather than exercise a little care and foresight and self-conquest, in order to adjust their plans for securing the best. Yes, it would be benevolent to rejoice at a decree of Heaven that should rescind the assurance of immortality, and assign the end of life as the end of existence to beings who value their future prospects so little, or hate them so much, that they cannot endure that the idea of those prospects should interfere in the direction of their present pursuits, and are capable of pleading this aversion in justification of itself. They too might rejoice at such a decree; since, if the aversion to dwell often on the *idea* of futurity is so strong, what will not be their abhorrence of the reality when it shall arrive? But since they believe, after all, that such a grand reality will certainly arrive, they ought to regard their reluctance, whether arising from nature or habit, or both, to conform the whole scheme of life to this anticipation, with the very same degree of abhorrence which this reluctance, if not subdued, will become

at least the cause of their feeling against the state itself, for a happy introduction into which it will have prevented their cultivating the indispensable pre-requisites. This aversion to form and execute our scheme of life on a calculation adapted to the infinite extent of our existence, ought unequivocally to be regarded as a more pernicious thing than the physical evils of disease, famine, and hostile ravage, and to be deprecated and resisted with not less earnestness. One should think this resistance, dictated by rational self-interest as much as by the authority of religion, would also be aided in a mind possessed of any philosophic enlargement by a love of what is expansive and sublime. Is it not a nobler thing to form a plan on the scale of an infinite duration, than one limited to a few summers and winters? Is it not a very noble thing to have it to say, I adjust my scheme of action in this manner, because I shall live for ever? Surely it is as base and contemptible as it is irreligious and will prove disastrous, to regret that we are not allowed to enjoy the privilege of quietly spending our time on a plan which would be rational if a heap of dust were all that should remain of us after we had ended it.

§ 14. This inculcation of spending all our time with a reference to the ultimate object, will not, at this time of day, need to be qualified by an explanation that it does not imply an abandonment of the common pursuits or the uncorrupted part of the pleasures of life. If the anticipation of the immense

future part of our being were so far to absorb our thoughts as to rob the present diminutive portion of what is requisite to its immediate interests, it would be indeed an incomparably less violation of the economy adapted to combine both these interests, than if the diminutive portion should monopolize what is due to the immeasurable sequel ; but still it would be a violation. And it would be one into which only the most ignorant superstition could lead ; since the Master of the economy has appointed the transaction of the affairs of our present situation as a large part of that exercise of faculties and virtue through which we are to pass to a greater scene. Only, these transactions are to be conducted under such rules of moderation, with such views to utility, with a design so little terminating in the things themselves, with such a disposition of them as parts of a general plan which points to a distant object, and with such a habitual devout reference in all things to the approbation of the Almighty, as will give these transactions quite another character than that of the very same things in profaner hands. We may confidently ask, whether under these conditions they will *not* have a quite different character, and whether any mortal ever acquitted himself more nobly in secular affairs than many we could cite of those who have habitually acted under the influence of the most solemn anticipations ? At the same time, it is equally obvious that, while a large proportion of the time spent under even the severest application of the

great law that I have been stating, will necessarily be occupied by the common concerns of life, yet a great number of employments, not accounted criminal or at all blameable by the generality of mankind, will be rigidly interdicted.

§ 15. Here it may also be added, that persons who have yet to determine on their particular profession or business, and whose property, or time of life, or connections, or talents, place a variety of departments at their choice, should be admonished to consider which of them, with the same measure of time and industry, would be, in a moral view, the most advantageous. It had been a melancholy waste of time even amidst the utmost possible industry, if, for instance, John De Witt had happened to prefer the studies of an artist or a critic to those of a statesman. I lately read with a mixture of regret and indignation, the life of an accomplished and devout man of the earlier part of the seventeenth century, who, after having possessed himself at an early age of almost every kind of literature, after having travelled over a great part of Europe with the most observant investigation of governments, art, and national characters, surprising and captivating the intelligent people of every place he visited by his manners, his capacity, his address in difficult circumstances, and his intrepidity; after having taken an important part in public transactions, and evinced extraordinary talents as a senator, adopted, notwithstanding this fair opportunity of giving the nation

and the age the rare privilege of having at least one virtuous and incorruptible politician, the determination of retiring into rural obscurity and leading the life of an ascetic. He executed his determination before he had reached the meridian of life, entered into holy orders, and being restrained by a strange veneration for higher duties of the clerical office from presuming to preach, occupied part of every day in reading the prayers in the church of a parish almost destitute of inhabitants. He did, indeed, promote various plans of a useful though sometimes rather superstitious tendency, within the limits of a narrow district ; but all this while, if he had prosecuted the career in which he first set out with such auspicious omens, he might in all appearance have exerted a beneficent influence on the affairs of the whole nation. Or if he could not have prevented an accumulation of evils, he might have continued to make, as he had successfully begun to do, an eloquent exposition of their causes, and a courageous war on their perpetrators. By occupying an eminent station, he might have combined to one purpose the powers and activity of many men very valuable as instruments of one agent, but quite useless as separate, independent agents ; and it is difficult to pardon the humility and the monastic ideas of Christian duty which reduced a man, who might have worked in the manner of Briareus, to do good with a single hand.*

* FERRAR. His name was Nicholas Ferrar, the son of an East India

If a man has fairly the choice of two distinct departments of action, the one of which might be adopted with the reasonable hope of accomplishing as much good in ten years as he could in the other if it were possible for him to live to the age of Noah, he shows but little value for Time if he can forego so capital an opportunity of *creating* it by choosing to live a century within a year. The occupations of the inferior department, though engrossing throughout the year an equal share of Time, may, it is true,

merchant, born in 1591. He was intimately acquainted with Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, Sir Edwin Sandys, and many other of the distinguished persons of his time. In his travels on the Continent, in which he displayed the highest intellectual, moral, and devout qualities, he met with a number of extraordinary adventures. After returning home he became the principal manager of the affairs of the American colonies. As a member of Parliament he was the leading speaker, though little more than thirty years old, in the impeachment of the Lord Treasurer Cranfield for oppressing the persons whose interests were embarked in the Virginia colony. The success of the measure was attributed very much to the eloquence of this young man. His retirement from all public concerns was adopted from religious motives, and with the utmost deliberation. A long and well-written account of his life was drawn up by a Dr. Turner, Bishop of Ely, and left by him in manuscript. It remained in the hands of the persons to whom his papers descended, till it was communicated to the conductors of a miscellany called the Christian Magazine, in a volume of which, for the year 1761, this curious memoir was lately pointed out to me. In his retirement, Ferrar assembled round him the different branches of his family (he was not a father or a husband), and formed them into a little society, somewhat resembling the Moravian fraternity, but under a far more rigid discipline as to the employment of time, a discipline indeed bearing too much resemblance to some of the austerities of popery. His biographer seems to have approved his abandonment of public usefulness for this mode of life.

be much less difficult ; but this will hardly be enough to preserve his complacency, while he reflects, at the end of such a period, that he might have effected as much good in less than a week as he has in the whole fifty, if he had chosen to operate with a more powerful, though possibly more hazardous, machinery. If I am asked what I mean by the term *good*, I have only to refer to what I have said at such length respecting the grand ultimate object of all improvement of Time ; whatever the rational consideration of that object will dictate to be done, is good. But even if a man should be unable to understand the term as expressive of any other thing than money or fame, the reasoning will be still right. If he *must* have a large portion of these, he had better adopt comprehensive schemes for the attainment than diminutive ones ; provided, which is understood, that he has talents capable of contriving and executing such schemes. If the man who must have money had the choice of opening a quarry of stone or a vein of gold (for I will suppose him placed in Peru, which would be heaven to him), he would deserve his reward if he preferred the former. And as to the man who must have fame or die, he will not confine himself to harangue a vestry if he can harangue a senate, will not write madrigals if he can compose an epic, will not be a corporal if he can be a general. I say, if they *must* gain wealth and fame ; but there is no absolute *necessity* in the case. The man of virtue, on the contrary, the servant of

the Almighty, *is* under a necessity in his department, a necessity as absolute and rigorous as fate. He *must* accomplish all he can in the sacred cause to which he has finally devoted himself, and therefore, he, at all events, is bound to adopt the most enlarged plan, and the strongest machinery of means within his power of choice.

It will not be needful to suggest how much prudence is requisite in the application of the principle of selecting the highest and amplest department of action which a man's situation and talents will permit him to enter, as every one has witnessed the mischief which a person has occasioned to others, and the misery and perhaps ruin brought on himself, by entering on an employment which he had not the resources, or the abilities, or the fortitude to prosecute ; while he has often the mortification to be contrasted and to contrast himself with another person who, having adopted, perhaps in the same year or month, a less ambitious order of pursuits, has gradually advanced with uniform prudence and perseverance, till he now holds a very dignified rank in respectability and usefulness. When the principle is applied to the question of exchanging an employment which a man is perhaps successfully prosecuting, for a quite different one in which he thinks his time would admit a more valuable improvement, it involves this additional reason for proceeding cautiously, that the time which will be consumed during the interval while he is acquiring a different

kind of knowledge and new habits, being deducted from the length of the more advantageous career on which he wishes to enter, may reduce the whole value of this shortened course of action much nearer than he is aware to the same amount which he would obtain by persevering in his present course, which would be materially longer from having no such interruption. This consideration will appear of still more consequence when we recollect the uncertainty of life, which makes it desirable that there should be no long intervals in which the useful undertakings of life are positively at a stand.

The general views of Time which I have thus far endeavoured to exhibit, seemed requisite in order to give force to the observations to be made on its improvement or waste, as exemplified in a series of particulars. General views alone would be unsatisfactory, and perhaps of inconsiderable use, and yet at the same time they must constitute the authority of the arguments and censures arising in the examination of the various modes in which time is employed. It may, therefore, be proper to solicit the reader's candour in regard to the frequent repetition of ideas concerning the value, the rapidity, the capacity, and the ultimate object of Time, as I foresee that the nature of the subject will make this unavoidable.

Part the Second.

CONTAINING

THOUGHTS ON INDOLENCE; INTERVALS OF TIME;
AND SOLITARY LIFE.

PART II.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

§ 1.—THE INEFFICIENCY OF BRIEF AND TRANSIENT NOTICES OF THE SUBJECT.—THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME VERY RARELY AND IMPERFECTLY BROUGHT UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF CONSCIENCE.

§ 2.—A RIGHT JUDGMENT ON THIS SUBJECT ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL RULES FOR JUDGING RIGHT OF ALL OTHER DUTIES.

§ 1. A WRITER cannot exp^{at}iate long on topics of obvious truth, without appearing both to his readers and himself to have said more than he ought to have deemed necessary for impressing the subject on the mind. It is not without some measure of this feeling that I glance back on so many pages employed in such a general representation of Time as may tend to constrain the conscience to take a deep interest in all the modes of spending it. And yet if brief and transient notices of the subject were enough to effect this end, how has it happened that so many persons, who have often heard these short, incidental admonitions, have, notwithstanding, continued all their lives till this very hour in the habit of wasting their time without feeling much of the pain of guilt?

No doubt it is too probable that many of these persons would have shewn just the same insensibility to this point of duty and crime, if, instead of slight occasional suggestions, they had heard lectures expressly intended or adapted to throw on their mind the concentrated force of all the ideas relating to this subject. Their insensibility to the arguments of this subject may be but a part of that general obduracy to all serious considerations which shows that the *moral* part of the economy of the globe has a gradation of substances analogous to that in the *mineral* part,—of which, though it be presumed that they are all fusible by some imaginable degree of heat, yet several are of a quality to resist any actual force of fire that human art can apply to them. But it may be hoped that such an assemblage of ideas may have some little effect on those who possess a considerable degree of conscience, but have seldom been taught to make the improvement or waste of Time one subject of its jurisdiction. Persons who have utterly thrown away, if it were brought into one account, many years of life, and several hours of this very day, will meet you with the most cheerful self-complacency ; when these same persons, if they had committed some crime of a more positive nature and a more odious name, would be oppressed with shame, would shrink from society, and feel, separately from this mortification, a great degree of honest regret. And yet perhaps this crime would amount to a very small part of the guilt contracted by destroying time,

though the still increasing weight of this guilt is borne without complaint or consciousness.

§ 2. It becomes necessary to admonish them that the sphere of their duty extends, not only to all things of which their consciences take account, but also to the great work of ascertaining whether conscience itself takes an account of all that really belongs to it. And they cannot be too positively and explicitly informed that this primary duty has been neglected, if they do not feel a habitual solemn responsibility respecting the subject of this essay. It should be suggested to them that, without a right judgment of what they owe to Time, they are without one of the essential rules for judging right of all other duties. For the moral estimate of actions must depend, not solely on the quality of each, but must include a consideration of the space which they occupy and their distances from one another. The full application of this essential rule might have a strange and alarming effect in our estimates of ourselves and others ; as it might possibly compel us to pronounce on the whole that a life is bad, even though all its actions could be proved to be good. For though the actions were all good, yet if each of them has occupied, through indolence, double or far more than double the space of time that it ought, and if between each of them and the following one there has been a long vacant interval, it may be too probable that much the smaller part, that not more than one-fifth of the whole duration, has been really occupied in virtuous

action. But if the much greater part has been thus left vacant, and if a positive duty belonged to every share of this vacant space, and if the omission of each of these duties was a positive crime (and it were idle to prove this), then the whole amount will contain much more evil than good. On this part of the subject I shall make some observations in the next chapter.

CHAPTER I.

INDOLENCE.

- § 1.—VARIOUS FORMS OF INDOLENCE: ONE IS THE RELUCTANCE OR DELAY SHEWN TO MAKE THE FIRST EFFORT, AND THEN THE SLOWNESS OF PERFORMANCE, OR READINESS TO INTERMIT THE WORK.
- § 2.—ANOTHER MODE* OF INDOLENCE STILL MORE DESPICABLE.—SATISFACTION IN DOING ABSOLUTELY NOTHING.—DESCRIPTION OF AN INDOLENT MAN.
- § 3.—EXCESS OF SLEEP ANOTHER KIND OF INDOLENCE: MAY BE CALLED A PERNICIOUS ENCHANTMENT.
- § 4.—INJURIOUS EFFECT OF TREATING THIS HABIT OF EXCESSIVE SLEEP WITH PLEASANTRY.
- § 5.—UNNECESSARY SLEEP A SERIOUS MORAL EVIL: MAKES AN IRREPARABLE CHASM IN INTELLIGENT EXISTENCE.—AN ACT OF INGRATITUDE TO THE CREATOR.
- § 6.—ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE CRIMINALITY OF EXCESS IN SLEEP: (i.), ABSENCE FROM HOME DURING A CALL FROM A FRIEND ON THE POINT OF LEAVING THE COUNTRY; (ii.), PROLONGING ABSENCE WHEN A RELATIVE IS LYING AT THE POINT OF DEATH; (iii.), ABSENCE DURING THE OCCURRENCE OF A DISASTER WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED: (iv.), ABSENCE FROM SITUATIONS WHERE DUTY DEMANDS PERSONAL INSPECTION OR EXERTION.
- § 7.—UNNECESSARY SLEEP ALWAYS INVOLVES THE LOSS OF
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INESTIMABLE ADVANTAGES.—ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, WHAT EVIL?

- § 8.—TO A PERSON CHARGEABLE WITH THIS BAD HABIT, A SALUTARY MORTIFICATION WOULD BE THE CONTRAST WITH PERSONS REMARKABLE FOR THEIR DILIGENT IMPROVEMENT OF TIME AND HABITS OF EARLY RISING, SUCH AS AN INDUSTRIOUS MECHANIC OR LABOURER.
- § 9. THE CONTRAST WITH A MAN DEVOTED TO MENTAL PURSUITS.
- § 10.—THE CONTRAST WITH A MAN OF DEVOUT HABITS.
- § 11.—AN INSTRUCTIVE COMPUTATION OF THE PROPORTION OF THE TIME WASTED IN EXCESS OF SLEEP TO THE WHOLE TERM OF LIFE.
- § 12.—WHETHER THE TIME SHALL BE SAVED FROM SLEEP IN THE MORNING OR EVENING.—DESCRIPTION OF A MORNING IN THE COUNTRY.
- § 13.—THE LISTLESSNESS CALLED “ENNUI,” OR “TÆDIUM VITÆ,”—EMPHATIC REPROBATION OF THE COMPLAINT OF HAVING TOO MUCH TIME.—TIME NOT TRANSFERABLE FROM THE IDLE TO THE INDUSTRIOUS.

§ 1. No terms of caution or of censure are too strong to be applied to those who through pure indolence are permitting an ample portion of life to pass away in mere vacancy. This shows itself in a variety of forms. I need not describe it as it appears in the reluctance and delay to make the first effort in a task which the force of necessity, or possibly an obstinate and pertinacious sense of duty, compels a man not altogether to neglect; nor that slowness of performance, that readiness to intermit the work, and those contrivances to defer the neces-

sity of resuming it, by which he consumes ten times the number of days or hours which were necessary for completing the undertaking. He is thus doing a worse thing than if he had purchased an article at ten times its value in money ; and yet we rarely see him so outrageously indignant at himself for having permitted himself to suffer this flagrant imposition in this *moral* traffic, as he would have been in the supposed case of his having been defrauded of perhaps nine guineas in the laying out of ten. If he, after having incurred this loss of time, were to meet another man who had incurred such loss of money, it is probable he would either pity his misfortune or ridicule his folly. This is much the same as if a man, whose negligence has occasioned his house to be burnt, should pity or despise another man whose carelessness has caused some slight article of furniture or decoration to be spoiled. Or, as if a man who has alienated his lands should look down on another man who has mismanaged one of his crops. It will be in vain for this indolent man, when a friend, or when his conscience, reminds him what a long space has elapsed since he began, or ought to have begun, this particular business, to allege that he has compensated this consumption by the quantity of other work which he has done in the intervals ; for we know perfectly well that in those intervals, when a man's indolence is struggling with his conviction that there is one particular task in which he ought to be en-

gaged, he will not to any good purpose attend to other employments.

§ 2. A second form of this time-wasting indolence is less unpleasant to its subject, but still more despicable and hateful. It is that satisfaction in doing absolutely nothing, of which we have known many instances. From what we have seen it is easy to picture to ourselves an example in a man whose competence of property exempts him from any necessity of exertion for that subsistence which compels the industry of the greatest part of mankind. We can imagine this man sitting in vacant tranquillity for hours together, with a countenance that gives one the same kind of idea as the surface of a muddy stagnant pond. He places himself perhaps near the fire, which he occasionally amuses himself by stirring. Here, in good humoured inanity, he sometimes remains a long time without even any semblance of occupation, and almost without moving hand or foot. He just notices what is going on in the house, yawns occasionally, and asks some question about dinner. The lazy neutrality of his sensations is perhaps a little stimulated by his pipe, accompanied or followed by the trifling chat of some relation or neighbour that calls on him. The newspaper agreeably occupies him a considerable time; and he preserves the same equilibrium of tranquil stupidity through lottery-schemes, variation of stocks, elopements to Gretna Green, trials for murder, and battles on the Continent. A sea-fight,

perhaps, comes nearer his sensorium than anything else, and he is lighted up to a degree of animation as he reads of broad-sides and falling masts, and boarding and carnage, and striking of colours, and blowing up. He challenges all the world to beat Old England ; and as a mirror, of patriotic faith, is never tired of repeating what he deems the sapient remark, that the enemy will never show himself here so long as we have such a fleet. But even this elevation is transient, and his mind soon quietly recedes from all this bustle, as a tub, or a piece of timber, or a dead body floats away from one of these ships in this scene of tumult. If his house is in a town, he will often sit near the window to see who and what passes in the street. And as he has probably made more inquiries about the people in the neighbourhood and their business than he would have had any leisure to do if he had any business of his own, there are plenty of subjects of conversation with those who are with him in the house, supplied by the sight of the variety of people that he knows as they pass along. If he lives in the country, one shall see him on a fine day sitting on a bench near the door, just in order to "*take the fresh air,*" observe what is passing on the road at a little distance, and notice the rural business of the farms that lie in the vale within his view. He will not choose to have much ground himself, there is so much trouble required to manage it, and so much vexation with workmen. But the few fields which he likes to keep

in his hands furnish a pleasant little circuit for sauntering round. He will now and then pretend to work a little in his garden, to the diversion of the regular labourers, but will oftener content himself with remarking that it is a pleasant kind of work, and will walk about at his ease, computing the produce of his garden, his fields and his orchard. I might have assigned to him a little more of something like mental existence, and still left him profoundly indolent ; but this would have brought him into rather a different class of idlers, who may deserve their distinct share of our notice. Now who is not tempted to reproach the sun for shining on such a piece of moving matter, such a mockery of a rational nature ; a thing that can see seasons hastening away, all nature in activity, the moral world in a state of revolution, eminently good and bad men equally prosecuting their designs with an ardour that deplores the necessity of repasts and sleep, the termination of life rapidly approaching, and boundless prospects opening beyond, and preserve, amidst all, as perfect an indifference about time, and improvement, and progressive virtue, and preparation for futurity, as if no such concerns had ever been heard of on the globe ? And yet this loathsome and despicable thing has the most entire good opinion of itself, and is not ashamed to show its self-complacent front in any place or company where indolence does not forbid it to go. One has occasionally seen it when apparently listening to the

dictates of inspiration, or to narratives and descriptions relating to examples of such transcendent activity of excellence, that even persons who greatly surpass the general habits of mankind in the Improvement of Time, have been greatly mortified in placing themselves in comparison ; while *it* has felt no discomposure of its invulnerable satisfaction. When he has consumed his allotted quantity of corn, and spent all the years, which have been spent with much more dignity by a toad in the midst of a block of stone, his epitaph might properly be, "Here lies a person who has lost nothing by being buried ; for he is just as good a man under the ground as he was above it."

§ 3. *Excess of sleep* may be mentioned as the next kind or consequence of indolence. In a former age, when the good people of this country thought they had reason to know that every district was infested with a witch, a great degree of compassion was felt for the unfortunate person that fell under her spite and power, as well as indignation and abhorrence at the agency and the agent that had seized him for a subject. Besides all the buffetings and twinges, it was reasonably enough deemed a very miserable thing to be hampered and manacled, to be sometimes bound fast in a chair, to be fixed in an instant at a gate or a stile so as to be unable to enter or get over, or perhaps to be led astray in a wood in the evening, and obliged to wander the whole night without being able to find

the way out till morning ; while every spiteful diversity of mischief was reducing to ruins the goods and chattels of the house and dairy. The same commiseration, though somewhat differently modified by the splendour of the superstition, was felt for the reputed captives of enchantment of more romantic ages and climates, which have transmitted their legends of men sunk into helpless langour by the touch of magic wands, entranced in mystical slumbers, beguiled into an imaginary Paradise, or decoyed into a gloomy den to be confined among hideous monsters. All this is very diverting to us who are no more afraid of witches and magicians than we are of the serpents or the simoon of Africa. But meanwhile there prevails among us another species of enchantment, extending to a greater number of unfortunate persons, and doing, on the whole account, a greater quantity of mischief than was even in the darkest ages attributed to witches and magicians. At six or seven o'clock in the morning, probably several millions of persons in England, and perhaps one million at eight or nine, might be found under the spell of this enchantment, deprived of all faculty, sense, and voluntary motion, and fixed in such a state that the most splendid exhibition might be made before them, and they would not perceive it ; a plot of treason might be discussed in the room, and they could not give evidence ; or a conversation might be held on the subject of murdering them, and they would feel no alarm. They

are divested of all sympathy with the general activity of nature—all interest respecting the general state of human affairs—and all care about their own immediate duty and welfare ; in short, they are very like so many logs of wood. It is to so much of this suspension of consciousness and agency as Nature refuses to take to her own account, that I apply the denomination of pernicious enchantment, since it is to be considered as an artificial state in which it is unfortunate to be confined, and to which it is criminal to make a voluntary surrender. And no one will pretend that this surrender is *not* voluntary, as much so as any other part of the system of life. For if it were not in general easy to acquire the habit of awaking at a proper time, it is in all cases possible to engage some relative or neighbour whose own conduct is exemplary in this particular, to *break the spell*. Neither will any one pretend much difficulty about ascertaining how much Nature, freed from bad habit, really claims. It seems to be allowed by all proper judges, that in mature life (it is needless to specify the exceptions of debility and old age) the necessity of sleep may be confined to six hours, or perhaps extended to seven at the utmost in a life of constant laborious exertion. And no persons can show a more active vigour, or less mark of an injurious privation, than many of those whose early discipline or virtuous resolution has fixed the habit of not exceeding this measure. Not to mention that many distinguished men are recorded to have al-

lowed themselves a much shorter measure than this, by which some of them probably injured their health, while others apparently did not. It is the *will*, therefore, that is enchanted ; and in a moral Essay on the value and Improvement of Time, it is indispensable to reprobate, in the severest terms, that laxity of principle and insensibility of conscience, which can suffer the will to remain under such an influence.

§ 4. The subject might supply and warrant many ludicrous observations and descriptions ; but since it is too seldom considered as under the cognisance of the gravest laws relative to virtue and vice, there will be more propriety in suggesting one or two of the more serious class of ideas. And, indeed, the first serious observation, perhaps ought to be, on the injurious effect produced by always giving a cast of pleasantry to the mention and the accusation of this fault. When reprovers and monitors make sport of their own crimination, the capital part of the charge seems done away, and the culprit soon makes light of his responsibility by taking the gay tone of those who arraign him. This pleasantry of accusation gives, if I may so express it, a kind of buoyancy to guilt, which prevents its lying heavy on the conscience. And the person who has been assisted, by the ludicrous style of the accusation, to evade its moral force, will soon be fortified by habit to defy its ridicule. After having been accustomed awhile to this light discipline, the sinner will come

from ten hours' sleep into the breakfast room with an arch and good-humored confidence, which provokes the attack, perhaps by a jig or a whistle. Ridicule is never so inefficacious as when applied to that of which the offending feature is a substantial moral evil : because the grave quality of this evil takes off the point of the ridicule as not an appropriate mode of attack ; while yet the ridicule takes off the importance of the evil.

§ 5. That the merge of time in unnecessary sleep merits the full charge of being a serious moral evil, ought to appear, if we consider, for one thing, that this is, as to all moral and intellectual purposes, to choose an absolute annihilation for so long a time. It is to choose rather not to be, than to be, during a certain space ; and if this willingness to surrender our being could be extended to three or four times this space, it would amount to the choice of complete non-existence, the dreary and impious choice, as well as expectation, of an Atheist. Yet it is not even *his* choice for the *present* time ; but only at a distant period, when he shall have exhausted life. Worse in this respect, then, than the Atheist, the excessive sleeper chooses to be *now* as much non-existent as he can. He voluntarily makes a chasm in the line of his being, which will remain a circumstance of ruin, unrepaired and unrepairable, to all eternity. Though he live for ever, it will not be possible for him to have lived as much as it was antecedently possible, on his coming into the world, for him to

live. A person born at the same time, and never wasting in his maturer life any hour in needless sleep, will have an advantage against him to all eternity, in recollecting a longer career of intellectual existence, and might, at the remotest periods of duration observe to him: "The time of *my* existence runs somewhat further back toward that eternity preceding time, where the existence of the Deity is lost in dark and immeasurable mystery." This, however, may not mortify him; for since he sets so little value on existence that he can willingly lose large spaces of it *now*, why may he not always retain this humble estimate of it, and set less value on it than many other beings *then*? And if this present contempt and waste of it should lessen its future felicity, he necessarily *will* set less value on it.

Not looking so far forward, however, what shall we think of the gratitude to the Creator shown in this contempt of the grand privilege by which He has distinguished us from the earth on which we tread? Is it not directly to tell Him that He might just as well have waited a few years longer before He had conferred it, for that we, during several hours in the twenty-four (besides those *necessarily* lost in slumber) think it little worth our while to verify or enjoy this pretended high distinction? and that there are what might be waking spaces, to the amount of years in all, which we had rather throw away than use? Is it not to tell Him, that as to a large portion of our being (besides, I repeat, that

which is necessarily given to sleep), He has no more claims on gratitude for it than if He had made us trees or stones? It is at least absolutely to tell Him, that though the being should be of some trival value, He has, however, assigned us nothing worth performing or enjoying in a very considerable part of it;—that there is nothing in His creation, His government, or Himself, that it is worth keeping our faculties in a state of consciousness in order to contemplate. And it is strongly to hint to Him, that in His promises of a future existence He has employed a language that greatly overrates the favour He means to confer. I cannot perceive that this is too aggravated a charge. The only thing that could be alleged in extenuation, would be, that the bad habit is indulged without any deliberate consciousness of such a preference of non-existence, or intention of such an insult to the Giver of being. But no habit ought to be indulged in this unthinking manner; and after a formal admonition that the habit amounts *in effect* to no less than such a preference and such an insult, this plea can be admitted no longer.

§ 6. If, however, it were deemed to carry too much the appearance of moral rigour to call the excess of sleep a wilful temporary annihilation of being, the very lightest idea under which it could be represented would be that of *absence* from all that can verify that existence, or make it worth having. And the disadvantages and criminality of this moral absence might be illustrated with a comparison with

the unfortunate circumstances which we can easily imagine connected with personal and local absence. Suppose a man were, without any necessity and in the idlest spirit of amusement, to be absent some days from his usual place of residence and activity, and that while he was away an estimable and important friend were to call at his house, in his way toward a port from which he was immediately to embark for a distant part of the world, from which he is not likely to return any more ;—the absentee, on hearing this at his return, would feel the utmost mortification and regret at having thus lost the only and last opportunity of seeing the person, perhaps the most important to him in the world. His mortification would be much greater, if it were possible that he could, from mere negligence, or from a persuasion that his friend would not act with so much punctuality and haste, have thus wandered away after being expressly informed that his friend would come about that time. The feeling would be raised to its utmost pitch, if he were informed that his friend had some very important communications to make to him, but that they were of a nature which he was not at liberty to make without a personal interview. Now Time bears a striking analogy to such a friend, in all these points of foreseen arrival, transient visitation, power of communicating important advantage, and irrevocable departure ; and the man is guilty of this folly, and, whenever the reflective season shall come, will feel this pungent regret

and mortification, who can voluntarily absent himself in needless sleep while valuable portions of Time are presenting themselves and passing away.

A yet stronger illustration might be made if we could suppose it possible that a man should, from pure laziness, prolong his absence from home when apprised that his best relative is likely soon to expire. What terms of execration would he not be deemed to deserve, when he returned a little while after that relative was no more? And if all sensibility were not extinct, what intolerable self-reproach would he not feel while contemplating the lifeless object that lately, but for his detestable loitering, would have been soothed by his attention, would have affectionately spoken to him, would have given him the most salutary and interesting advice? How it would sting him to the soul to reflect that not any formidable obstacle or momentous employment had been the cause of his protracted absence, but that an unaccountable heedlessness or a besotted indolence had betrayed him into this unkindness to a person now beyond the reach of his regrets. But in the voluntary absence of our faculties in unnecessary sleep, we let that expire without our care which can do more for us than all human friends—which can do for us all that the power and benevolence of the Almighty can do; for the value of Time is exactly equal to all that infinite goodness would confer upon us in the act, and in the result, of the diligent and devout improvement of it.

We might again imagine instances of a man's being absent through mere tardiness of movement, or a vagrant disposition, from a station where he ought to have been found, just at the time that some disaster, which he might, if present, have prevented, takes place in his neighbourhood. Perhaps a worthy individual or family is ruined by some artifice of villainy, which he would have detected. A useful life may have been lost, which his skill or presence of mind might, in human appearance, have saved. A rash project may have been adopted, from which his prudence and influence might have dissuaded the persons who have now committed themselves to the hazard of becoming its victims. A worthy character may have been blasted for want of such evidence as he alone could have produced, and as he now brings too late to prevent an irretrievable injury. If a benevolent man, he would be very sorry at his return to find how much had been lost through an idle indulgence by which no good in the world has been gained. I do not say that a man who surrenders himself to an excess of sleep would often have the opportunity of performing, had he been awake during the time so consumed, exactly such services as these; but the accumulation of the benevolent labours of a more ordinary kind, which he might have performed within the ample portion of time formed by adding together all the hours lost in excess of sleep during the space of a few years, might probably amount to a greater value than that of

having performed *once*, during the same space of time, each of the signal services which I have specified.

Or, confining ourselves to a man's *own* advantage or injury alone, we might suppose many cases in which he would have reason to deplore the negligence or perverseness of having been absent from certain situations at certain times. In the course of our lives we may have often seen persons rambling or sauntering in places where they had nothing to do, whose absence from situations where duty required them to be found, was at that very time, though neither we nor they were aware of it, subjecting them to serious injury. We have seen a man passing away in good-humoured idleness, or some trifling amusement, the hours in which his absence was causing his harvests to be spoiled, or his manufacturing machines to be put in disorder. We have, perhaps, seen medical men consume an important portion of the day in a long and useless chat, while their presence was wanted by their patients. It is possible we have seen an experimental philosopher surrendering himself to conviviality, while some unlucky domestic, or clumsy imitator of his experiments, was making havoc of his machines, glasses, and preparations. We may have happened to see a self-complacent sentimentalist who was making himself easy in his security of conquest, while a more assiduous rival was supplanting him. A man may have been loitering days and weeks in our neigh-

borhood without employment or pursuit, while in the situation from which he ought not to have been absent the most favourable opportunities were opening a way to competence or fortune, which he found pre-occupied when he returned. One of the persons that we have seen in an idle and dissipated circle, may have been a man engaged in the most perplexing affairs, and who has returned from the dissipations of this circle to his proper station, to find that the person qualified beyond every other to advise and extricate him, has just been in his neighbourhood or at his house, and is gone away expressing his contempt of the man who could quit such concerns for visits or rambles of foolish amusement. It is even possible we have met in the street, or the road, a soldier divested of his military badges, and hastening away toward a distant hiding place, at the moment that his absence was reported to his officer, and his name given out for apprehension and punishment. We may have witnessed the mortification of a man of curiosity and science, who has found, on returning from a visit or ramble, that he has lost such an opportunity as he is likely never to have again of seeing some wonderful disclosure of nature or antiquity—some rare effect of art, or some collection of extraordinary productions. We may even be allowed to make the fanciful supposition of what perhaps we have not seen, the mortification of a man during whose absence, through dislike to employment or pursuit of diversion, his usual companions of labour

have found in prosecuting the work in which he refused to join them, a large deposit of concealed treasure of which they refuse to allow him any share.

§ 7. Now unnecessary sleep is a mode of absence admitting as little excuse as any of these instances. A man never returns from it without having lost inestimable advantages; and the case is so much the worse if he can habitually return from it without remorse for the guilt of having been willing to lose them. If, however, at his return to the sphere of conscious and active being, he should be so little abashed at the consideration of this protracted absence, as to be capable of asking *what evil* it has involved—we might answer him: The period and the arraignment may come when you will not ask this question in relation to wasted time with quite so much confidence. And meanwhile, it is easy to demonstrate the evil. Consider, if you had been awake and wisely employed during these two or three hours that have been lost in sleep, would that employment have been absolutely a work of supererogation, a performance beyond the utmost claims of virtue and your Creator? You dare not say that it would. But if it would not, what name is due to your total omission of it? You ask, *What evil?* Is there, then, in your mind no one estimable design for yourself or for others, of which you could during these hours have applied a thought to the arrangement, or a hand to the execution? Do you answer that there is none? But, then, to what purpose are

you in this world in any other form than that of a piece of earth, or a tree, in which state you might have supplied something and consumed nothing? You ask, *What evil?* Is it, then, in your account a *good* thing to have those duties to perform at ten o'clock which should have been performed at seven, and thus, of necessity, through each following hour to have on your hands the duty belonging to an earlier hour, till in the evening the duty belonging to several hours, even though you have been assiduous all your short day, is left undone for ever? You ask, *What evil?* And do you not apply terms of reproach and horror to a man who takes a large portion of opium, in order to lose in one sleep all that in the course of nature might have been the remainder of his life; and yet do you feel no guilt and self-reproach, for doing, in successive spaces, what will shorten your life as much as he does at once? *What evil?* What, then, is there nothing improper in your habits, nothing deficient in your virtues, nothing dark or mistaken in your judgment? All this you have suffered to remain; and just so much as might have been rectified by the waking diligence of these lost hours, just so much evil you have *done* in wasting them. You would not again ask *what evil*, if you knew the value of what actually has been presented to you in vain, and of what probably would have been presented if you had chosen to be in a state of reason and action. There has been offered to you, under the circumstances of

ease, quiet, and a sound state of your senses and faculties, a long series of moments applicable to the virtues of thought or action. And in such an application of them it is probable there would have been presented to you the advantages of important ideas, favourable incidents, kindling energy, and the assistance of Supreme power. From all this actual and this probable good you have chosen to be absent, and it is now gone for ever. And no words of execration can be too strong for the moral state of your mind, if you can be amused at the seriousness with which a friend might represent your loss. Into what sadness would this light feeling be converted, if you could be made fully aware of the depth of ingratitude which your conduct involves toward the Giver of Time and all it contains!

§ 8. One of the severest and most salutary mortifications to a man of this habit, if he retains any degree of conscience or shame, would be to introduce him, after rising on some morning of peculiar excess, to some of the persons remarkable for their early Improvement of Time, if a strong representation could be given him of the manner in which they have been employed, while he has been lost and has lost his time in sleep. The presence of even an industrious mechanic or labourer, of any useful class, would be fatal, one should think, to his self-complacency, which would still more totally desert him when he should be brought into immediate comparison with a vigilant student, or a

man who has employed the early hours in exercises of devotion. Here, it might be said to him, is a man who, to support his family, and perhaps to contribute a little to relieve the distresses of indigence, has been busy these three or four or five hours, in which he has performed a series of many thousand voluntary actions. You may see the effect of his labours. Those utensils which are now complete for use, were in the state of rude pieces of wood or iron when he rose this morning. Or that time-piece, which looks you in the face as an accuser, was in a state of disorder or defect which made it incompetent to its office, and has been strewn all in separate pieces, since he began his activity. Or the garden-bed near the sun-dial, which you may see from the window, was all covered with weeds, or the decayed stalks of a former produce, when this good man finished his slumbers this morning, though it is now dug up and smoothed and planted. All this while you have been in a state as listless and passive as the materials on which he has operated. He may, therefore, be held just as much superior in respectability to you as to those materials.

§ 9. Here again, it might be said so him (to the man detained to an advanced hour in sleep,) is a man who has been deeply occupied this morning in mental pursuits for so considerable a space of time, that in now reverting to the idea with which his train of thinking began, or to the first part of what

he has read, it appears as something long since. You are just beginning to acknowledge a new day; that grey twilight which departed so long since from the landscape and all its waking inhabitants seems yet to linger both on your faculties and your countenance; and all your expressions relating to the day or its employments are involuntarily of a cast implying that the day (that *your* day) is but just begun; while the equally unconscious manner of this other man's mentioning to-day, unintentionally implies that a large share of it is past. He speaks of to-day and its employments much in the same manner that you will in the afternoon and evening. But though this hour of your rising has to you the freshness of a new day, and to him the staleness of an old one which he has in a considerable part expended, yet it is accomplished by much less exhilaration to you than to him. For his mind has become animated by its employments, and enriched by their results, while you have the consciousness of having done and gained nothing, and the languor which is reluctant to begin. Even if both had stopped at the very same point of attainment last night, there would have been a material disparity at this *your* morning hour. There is a vacuity in your immediate retrospect which in his is filled with interesting objects. He joins you at this hour with the advantage which a man who has made an excursion round England has over one that has lived during all the time in an alley of

London. He has possessed his mind of an assemblage of important thoughts and images, by the time that you seem but to have little more than recovered the power of animal sensation. He has, perhaps, determined an important question which you are but just recovering an unpleasant recollection that your last inquiries left in a doubt, which will suspend your plan of action till it is dispersed. He has, perhaps, qualified himself to defend those views of truth which you, for want of having arranged the arguments, must be content to sit in silence while you hear them opposed or ridiculed. He has, perhaps, by the end of these hours, surrendered to the conviction resulting from serious inquiry, an opinion which you still retain as a prejudice for want of examination. He has, perhaps, discovered some track of thought leading safely beyond the sphere which yesterday limited his intellectual viaws, and to-day will be found to limit yours. Or at the least he has made himself more familiar with subjects already understood, has reconsidered the force of admitted arguments, or has enlarged his knowledge of facts, of present or past times. He may have contemplated recorded facts which he would be glad for their interest or their instruction to be sure he shall recollect a thousand times, in future life ; or have found such striking and happy illustrations of truth that he will never advert to them without remembering as an almost sacred portion of time the morning when they occurred to him.

Do you not envy him? Do you not most indignantly reproach yourself? But both your envy and self-reproach are in vain : he will be recorded to have gained what you will be recorded to have irretrievably lost. By having passed through a long succession of thoughts, it is impossible he should not have left at a serious distance behind him a person who has during all the time voluntarily alienated from himself the very powers of thinking ; and if he uninterruptedly perseveres to maintain the same progress, you will never reach him more.

§ 10. A person whose conscience did not continue to sleep after he was himself awake, would be still more oppressed by being brought into comparison, after having consumed several hours in needless sleep, with a man who has consecrated these same hours to devotion. Here, it might be said to him, is a man that has been in the most elevated condition to which the mind is permitted in this state to rise, while you have been in the humblest to which it is compelled to subside. He has conversed with the Original Being, while you have been unconscious of your own. He has fixed his contemplations on the idea of Deity, till it has seemed to absorb as a little thing the idea of the universe, as the ancient deluge overwhelmed a city or a grove ; while you have been, and chosen to be, in a literal and perfect sense, without God in the world. His mind has gone forth into the temple of all space, and worshipped in harmony with whatever are the noblest

created beings it contains ; while yours has been retained and absorbed in the sole service of keeping a diminutive piece of matter warm. Or if, besides performing this office, it has been busy amidst a fantastic crowd of images, they all vanished away, while the mind has just time to follow them with a momentary glance of scorn, as it was recovering its rational state ; on the contrary, the ideas on which this devout man has been exercising his mind impress their importance exactly in proportion to the clearness of his reason ; and if he could be ten times more rational, they would appear ten times more important. The highest realities which can be the objects of thought have an indistinctness and a remoteness which prevent them, even when acknowledged to be of momentous interest, from making a powerful impression on a mind that does not in a very formal and deliberate manner fix its attention on them ; this devout man, by having applied the whole effort of his faculties, has drawn on his mind during these hours the whole force of these realities. His mind has, therefore, been drawn into that stricter connexion with the greatest order of things to which it is related, which will tend to prevent his sinking into an exclusive connection with the inferior order to which also he is related ; while you, having been quite absent from all thought till the world requires you to be present to its business, are going to engage in the inferior department of your concerns with a mind but little prepared to maintain a proper regard

to the superior. He has been acquiring a more decided conception of the grand purpose of life, and is bringing this with him as a rule in conformity to which he will select both his ends and his means ; while you, having divested yourself of the very consciousness of life, during the time that he has been fixing the great purpose of life, must now devote yourself to mere action without having any general enlarged principle of action. He has been making a solemn pledge that all his agency shall be of the nature of service to the supreme Master, whose assistance, therefore, he has ventured to supplicate and now ventures to hope for ; while you have to acknowledge that if your exertions be accepted by that Power, it will be more than you have intended ; and if His assistance is imparted, it will be more than you have thought it worth while to crave. And, finally, this devout man has been employing a short portion of his time in contemplating the shortness and uncertainty of the whole duration of his time in the present state, and most fervently seeking to avert all the just causes of apprehension concerning its close ; and you perhaps are persuaded that this one exercise of this one morning may contribute very much to this great object ; and yet you, notwithstanding you are perhaps haunted by the gloomiest kind of apprehensions, would rather continue to be involved in them, and to see them darkening into still deeper shade before you, than begin to rescue from idle slumbers the portion of time which,

employed in earnest devotion, would disperse them for ever. If your conscience were in a proper state of sensibility, you would have been grieved to have been, even for one week, in habits thus contrasted with an example which you admire. But what then do you think of the contrast, if the fact should be that he has spent in devotion several hours which you have consumed in sleep, every day, for several years past? And what is it reasonable to anticipate as the final difference in the result, if each of these habits shall continue to the end of your lives?

§ 11. It would be an instructive amusement to make computations of the proportion which the time consumed in excess of sleep bears to the whole of life, and to the whole of what might be waking life; and of the measure of effect which might be produced in any given department of action by the application of so much time. We have maintained that a man who sleeps eight hours might redeem two. Now it is evident that these two would be entirely at his command; for if he can keep them so clear of every interruption as to pass them in undisturbed sleep, he can keep them equally clear of interruption for any other voluntary use. They will, therefore, be of considerable more value than an equal measure of the remainder of the day, or what is at present his *whole* day, since a certain proportion of those inevitable interruptions and slight avocations which are included within the day, and waste a very material part of it, must be reckoned to each of the shares into which we may imagine

it divided, while these two hours gained from sleep will not be subject to this deduction. They would, therefore, be equal in value to a sixth or at a least a seventh part of the entire day, or to one week, one month, or one year in every seven. And how easily both imagination and conscience may expatiate on this ground. Let it be imagined that a man, thirsting for knowledge, but necessarily much occupied in business, should be able to make such arrangements that, in addition to the intervals in the ordinary course of his days and engagements, he should secure one whole day in every week for the necessary reading and researches. It is easy to imagine what a signal privilege this would be deemed by himself, or by an acquaintance of similar taste but unable to make such an arrangement. And it is easy to conceive what a marked superiority he would in two or three years have acquired, either in general information or any particular branch of science, over the persons that were equal to him when he began to adopt this arrangement in which it was out of their power to imitate him. Or if an industrious man, whose daily labour throughout the year has been engaged to an employer, were to receive the privilege of withdrawing one whole week in every seven from this service, receiving still without interruption the same pecuniary allowance as at other times, and to apply that week entirely to employments on his own account, the effects of a diligent use of these seventh weeks would soon be discernible in his condition and

family, which would rise from the depressed level of his class into a new kind of competence, decency, and enjoyment. Or we may suppose a man who has been severely engrossed by business which confines him almost constantly to one place, to obtain, by some favourable turn of affairs, the liberty of perfectly disengaging himself for one month in every seven to indulge his curiosity and taste in excursions through every interesting part of the country. By the active employment of so much time, he will in the course of a few years have visited a great number of towns, of coasts, of natural and artificial curiosities, and of beautiful or romantic scenes ; will have taken a wide view of manners, of degrees of civilisation, of arts, and of rural economy, and will have conversed with an immense diversity of persons. Many other modes of illustration might be adduced, to show how much could be done in a sixth or a seventh part of a person's time. Now by reducing the indulgence of sleep from eight hours to six, a man may—not disengage from his other affairs as large a portion of time in the aggregate as that in which all these things could be done, but actually rescue it from mental non-existence, and add it to what will else be the criminally shortened extent of his life. He may extend his computations on this proportion of his time forward through as many years as he would wish, or as his age and health may seem to authorise him to expect to live, and form an estimate of how much might in this portion

be effected in any one of those employments in which wise and good men have delighted, or which at least they have deemed essential to their characters. In twenty years, if it were allowable for any man to anticipate so long a continuance of life, this difference between eight and six hours of sleep will amount to a measure of time in which, if knowledge were his object, he might attentively read a hundred and fifty or two hundred instructive volumes ;—if visiting persons in sickness and distress were his plan of duty, he might make five thousand such visits ;—if to gain money to expend in charity were his desire, even a poor man might earn for this purpose a larger sum than many a rich one will ever give ; if the instruction of the ignorant were the employment, he might impart millions of pertinent ideas ; if the discipline of his wild thoughts and unfortunate tempers were the task, he might maintain far more conflicts and gain far more victories than are recorded in the Iliad or the Roman History ; or if the time were employed in solemn supplications to Heaven, he might secure all that Eternity has to give. If he feels no duty of devoting the time to any of these employments, rather than resigning it to sleep, he has the greatest cause to deplore that he shall not a little while hence obtain the privilege of sleeping for ever.

§ 12. Whether the time shall be saved from sleep in the evening or the morning, can be a question only in particular instances in which the circumstances of business or the locality may give an acci-

dental advantage to the evening hours, to balance against the otherwise far superior claims of the morning. In the country, during the finer seasons of the year, it would betray an utter want of that sympathy with nature which has generally distinguished the most refined and elevated minds, not to be rescued from the sluggishness of sleep by the exquisite freshness of the vegetable, and vivacity of the animal creation, together with the soft and radiant smile of the dawning sky. The early morning in summer gives a feeling as if the world and time and existence were all new ; and a man of susceptible and reflective mind, when he rises in health, and walks in a rural scene, a little while previously to his regular engagements, feels his imagination blossom in imitation of the beauties profusely spread around him. After having experienced a few times the full enchantment of these feelings, he will be mortified when he awakes on a subsequent morning, and finds the sun shining, or rather glaring, through his windows from the great height of several hours above the horizon, feels the atmosphere glowing, and sees the dew all exhaled—all the flowers unfolded, the cattle so satiated as to be laid down in indolence or repose, and the labourers so far advanced in their employments as to show that they have been active many hours.

§ 13. Another thing which involves a perfect waste of Time, is that painful listlessness which in fashionable or more classical diction is called *ennui*,

or *tædium vitæ*. I shall not dwell long on this, however, because probably not a very numerous class of mankind has at once the temperament and the leisure for this habit of feeling. It is the feeling of a person who has no object of pursuit or interest, and yet cannot subside into a quiet apathy. He wishes for something to interest him, and yet is too languid even for the effort of attentively thinking of the objects that claim to interest the human mind. He wishes for something to employ him, and yet shrinks from the smallest task that requires exertion ; or if he has been induced to undertake it, very soon discontinues his application, through horror of labour. He envies the interest and animation of those whom he sees in the active pursuit of even an object that he despises ; but he is inclined to extend this contempt to objects of pursuit which he ought *not* to despise, because this softens a little his self-reproach by allowing him to think that his listlessness partly arises from his having a discernment and a taste too refined to permit any great interest in ordinary pursuits. This listlessness would vanish, if objects worthy to excite his activity were to be presented to him. And when occasionally he is compelled to acknowledge to himself that inveterate indolence is, after all, the basis of his complaint, he perhaps seeks an extenuation of the criminality and the shame in those disappointments which have repressed an activity that he had once begun to display, by rendering that activity in some one instance useless. A

transient relief is sometimes obtained by a singular incident in the neighbourhood, by the shows and novelties of a great town, by an unexpected visit, or by a novel or romance ; but the mind is left to relapse to the state of feeling which accuses the lingering movement of time. The cant denomination of "the enemy," and the detestable phrase of "killing time," have very correctly expressed the infelicity of having too much of that of which all wise men have complained of having too little.

There is no language emphatical enough to reprobate as it deserves, the feeling and complaint of having too much time. A man is beyond all admonition or hope, if he can take a comprehensive view of what it will be desirable or indispensable for a rational being to have effected or attained in the world before he goes out of it, and then complain of too much time. Let him consider what is an adequate return to the Divine Benefactor for all His gifts and kindness, and then repeat, if he can, this impious complaint. When he examines himself and finds a thousand things that imperiously require to be reformed, let him again say that he has too much time. When he has consulted his conscience, how many neglected duties press on him, and the more urgently for their having been neglected, let him repeat that he has too much time ! While there is an infinite number of important lessons to which his attention has been invited in vain, while the oracles of Inspiration have been but slightly studied, and

are but faintly remembered, while he is placed in the midst of a world full of interesting scenes and events, while the expanse of the universe displays in an endless succession of wider and still wider circles, its wonders and its riches, and while the attributes of the Almighty are disclosed with augmented grandeur at every progressive reach of contemplation, what an insult it is to his mind and to his Creator to complain that he has more time than he knows how to employ! And if he were himself deeply occupied with these great interests, what contempt he would feel to hear another man complain of the languor of mental vacuity, of the tediousness of time.

How unfortunate it is that those who are oppressed with too much time on their hands, cannot transfer some of the superfluous article to those who have too little. There are persons who have been lamenting the shortness of these very days and hours, of which the slaves of languor and disgust have been reproaching the tiresome length, and they would have felt the elation of men promoted to be princes, had it been a possibility, in the nature of things, for them to have gained what the others would have been glad to lose. To a man who has a multitude of important things to crowd into his time, the preciousness of an hour is to the account which these spiritless mortals make of their time, as the worth of a space of ground in the midst of the Metropolis, compared with that of an equal space in the waste of Siberia. A virtuous avarice and parsimony of

time makes a man almost repine that this great inheritance of nature should be distributed with an exact equality to all, while he considers to what a noble use his activity could put that possession which these wretched idlers are wasting in the grief that they cannot waste it fast enough. And especially the men who are aware that they are near the period of their time, and afraid they shall end it before the great work, for which Time was given, shall be finished, would grasp with greater eagerness than ever ambition at a sceptre, at any chance of obtaining the addition of a few of those hours which these victims of ennui are wishing for some means to support or consume. If these persons who are languishing under the weight of time for which they find no employment, can for a moment place themselves in thought in that severe predicament into which every day makes it more probable they will themselves ultimately fall, and yet feel no generous indignation at the sighs which they have been indulging, they are beyond the reach of admonition.

CHAPTER II.

INTERVALS.

- § 1.—THE LOSS OF TIME INCURRED BY THE NEGLECT OF INTERVALS.
- § 2.—CHANGES FROM ONE EMPLOYMENT TO ANOTHER SHOULD NOT BE UNNECESSARILY MULTIPLIED.
- § 3.—THE IMPORTANCE OF METHOD.
- § 4.—INCONVENIENCES SOMETIMES CAUSED AND OFTENER FELT BY A VERY METHODICAL MAN.
- § 5.—METHOD OUGHT NOT TO BE ABSOLUTELY INVIOABLE —THE IMPLEMENT OF UTILITY NOT THE CHAIN OF SLAVERY.
- § 6.—DESIRABLENESS OF CULTIVATING THE HABIT OF OBSERVATION.
- § 7.—BOOKS OF SHORT ESSAYS OR LIGHT HISTORY, CARRIED IN THE POCKET, OR THE GRAMMAR OF A LANGUAGE, USEFUL FOR FILLING UP INTERVALS.

§ 1. THE total loss of Time in the several modes that I have animadverted on,—pure contented idleness, needless sleep, and painful listlessness, is to be condemned without mercy as the most unqualified guilt. There is another loss of time on which the censure is to be pronounced with considerable mitigation, and that is, the neglect of many short spaces of time which occur in the intervals of our serious

engagements, and are impossible to be prevented, and difficult to be improved. They, however, form when all added together, so material a portion of our life, that the loss of them is to be regarded as a very serious evil. If a man even of considerable assiduity could have a complete account at the end of the year of the whole measure of time lost in short intervals, in consequence of passing inactively from one employment to another, of hesitation which to engage in next, of having forgotten to furnish himself with some inconsiderable but yet indispensable implement, of being fretted by slight local inconveniences, of waiting for the co-operation of other persons during a delay perhaps occasioned merely by their want of punctuality, or of losing that co-operation by failure of punctuality himself, he would be confounded to see this account placed in figures opposite to the account of the number of hours which he had spent in a real industry. And if this account of the time consumed in useless intervals were added to what had been expended in sleep, in the other indispensable refreshments of nature, and in the relaxation indulged after the fatiguing part of his employments, what would be his sensations in contrasting this collective account with the small space of time, as it would appear in comparison, which had been actually filled with industrious exertion? It is true that intervals of perfect inaction and mental vacancy may be allowed to follow some of the severe and protracted exertions of physical or intellectual

strength. But it will be admitted that such intervals, *in addition* to the space unavoidably surrendered to sleep and the several seasons of refreshment within the day, ought to be very short, and cannot need to recur very often. The corporeal and mental machine is not so extremely weak a thing, as that every thought should be anxiously in quest of occasions for giving it repose.

§ 2. In looking for the means of lessening this evil, it will be suggested as one useful direction that the changes from one employment to another should not be unnecessarily multiplied. If, for example, it is in a man's choice to change the nature of his employment, whether study or any other occupation, six times in the day, or to employ the whole time in three or four kinds, it would, perhaps, be better for the most part to adopt this latter plan, which would preclude two or three of the intervals involved in the former. He may devote the whole of the next day, with a similar avoidance of intervals, to the other three pursuits. And I am persuaded that of two men, of equal ability and industry, and whose employments equally admitted this choice of a slower or quicker vicissitude, the one who devoted the first day to half the six kinds of employment, and the second whole day to the other half, would accomplish more than he that divided each of the days among all the six. Besides the absolute space of vacancy, however small, between the laying aside of one occupation and the entrance on another, it is

impossible that even the hand, but incomparably more the mind, where the employments are intellectual, should not require some little time to adapt itself to the new mode of operation. And in mental employments, the obvious advantage in point of time gained by avoiding many intervals of transition, is perhaps much less than that which is gained in the habit of the mind. Prolonged application to one thing will tend to improve the power, and produce the habit of thinking in a continued train, which is one of the highest endowments of intellect. The habit of patient reasoning and invincible perseverance will never be matured in a plan of diverting the attention, however fixed it might be during the allotted time, from one thing to another in that quick succession of change which is injudiciously intended to turn the labour into an amusement. We are all quite enough aware of the advantage of relieving the physical and mental powers by change of the mode of exertion ; but we are not sufficiently warned, on the other hand, of the danger of acquiring from this continual shifting of the object of attention, the fickleness of thought which is fatal to all systematic energy of mind.

§ 3. The importance of Method, as another mean of preventing so much loss of time in small intervals, will already have occurred to every reader. The importance of method extends throughout the whole system of the Improvement of Time ; since the application of its principles alone can produce that

arrangement and combination which cause the diversified activity of life to *be* a system instead of a confused multiplicity of efforts without mutual dependence or connection, and perhaps counteracting one another; but I mention it here only for the advantage which it gives in making a man certain, when he is dismissing one kind of employment, what is to be the next. The life of an adventurer or a traveller will necessarily include so many occasions of action which are accidental and dependent on circumstances and persons beyond his control, that a large portion of his activity can be subjected to no methodical rules, and the choice of what he shall do at a particular time must be determined by what he could not know till that time arrives. A large proportion of mankind, on the other hand, are so rigidly bound down by the necessities of life to occupy almost all their time in one unvaried employment, as to have little room for arrangement and choice. But there are a considerable number whose situations, whose plan, or whose duty, include several definable occupations, which they can dispose, if they will exert consideration enough, into an order which will best combine the effect and advantage of them all. This order, appointing the several parts of the day or the week to their respective employments, will at the end of each bring to hand the next in succession, as regularly as the numerical names of the hours of the day follow one another, and by thus precluding the delay occasioned by hesitation and

selection, reduce the interval, unless pure idleness prolong it, to the mere moment of transition. At the close of his solitary pursuits, the man is not compelled to waste half an hour or a full hour in considering to which of his social offices or more public employments he shall devote the ensuing portion of the day. And if he continues longer in that more social or public employment than he intended, it is not because he does not know what he can occupy his time in if he quit it. If several kinds of active business, or if the labours of instruction, or if a plan of study, comprehending, of course, a diversity of subjects, should form the occupation of his life, his true policy for the saving of time in proceeding through the successive parts will be, to put the order of their succession as much as possible out of his own choice, by attending to them in one certain order till he acquires a habit of doing so, almost as fixed as mechanism. For if the succession of his occupations is so undetermined that very often at the end of one he has to wait for casualty or deliberation to guide his choice to the next, he not only may waste, in choosing it, half the time in which it might have been executed, but will often carry even into the execution, when he enters upon it, something of the wavering feeling which preceded the selection. He may be half repenting and half wishing to change the task he has adopted during half the time in which he is performing it. But very often he will make no choice at all. The liberty

and leisure for selecting one out of various modes of action, involves an exemption from the absolute necessity of adopting any. And man is not naturally or *essentially* active ; there are few persons on whose activity we could reckon, if they were neither compelled by necessity nor led by habit. When exempted in the distribution and succession of his employments from those laws of method which might soon have acquired an almost prescriptive authority, and would have precluded both deliberation and delay by fixing a habit, a man will often let the consideration of *what* he shall do, melt into the pure indolence that will do nothing. And thus will be lost, not only that short interval in which the selection was to have been made, but also the subsequent space of time in which the work that should have been selected was to have been accomplished.

§ 4. It is true that material inconveniences will be sometimes caused, and oftener felt, by a rigidly methodical man. Some of his refractory connexions, who are determiued to have also *their* method, or, just to assert their independence, declare against all method ; his friends, who cannot be brought to the required punctuality in their engagements and transactions with him ; his servants or other agents who are too dull, too giddy, or too self-willed to conform themselves to his arrangements, will not fail to incur his severest reproaches ; and in return his habits put it in their power to harass him in a great many ways, if they choose, and if they dare.

The exactness of his order makes little circumstances that interfere with it more vexatious than much greater ones to less regular men. He feels particular inconvenience in new scenes and occasional situations, where it would be absurd to expect persons and things to accommodate to him, but where, nevertheless, he feels it difficult to dismiss his habits so entirely, for the time, as to accommodate to them. Whoever will have the advantage arising from method, must be content to take it with a certain degree of deduction on account of this evil. But after this deduction is made that advantage will still be immense; and most of the men who have been eminent for their attainments and usefulness, have been examples of method and evidences of its effect.

§ 5. At the same time, this method ought to be the implement of utility, and not the chain of slavery. If it is frequently violated on slight occasions, it will soon lose its authority and its existence; but there will be some occasions which ought to set it aside without ceremony, for a time. Suppose an interesting friend to be announced who has been absent perhaps for years in distant countries, it would be worse than ludicrous for a man to continue after he had heard it an hour in his room or his field, simply because his method would not else be preserved. When an important turn in the affairs of commerce presented to a mercantile man a fair and just but transient opportunity of obtaining an extraordinary

advantage, he would of course forego for a while all the other pursuits to which he might on the very same day have been deliberately allotting his time. It might be very judicious for a man to have allowed himself as a general rule but a given portion of time for his walks or journeys, and yet to take a considerably greater length, if while he is out he should meet with some extraordinary exhibition of art, or production or phenomenon of nature.

If the investigator of truth, near the end of that division of the day which he had regularly appropriated to one particular department of inquiry, were to catch a glimpse of what seemed to promise an important discovery, he could not be so unwise as to turn to another subject because the hour appointed in his general plan for that change of his studies was arrived. If a paradise of visionary wonders and beauties has just opened on the imagination of the poet let no recollections of method, if he could be supposed to have ever thought of such a thing, let no signals of the arrival or departure of allotted hours, recall him from wandering there all the day or night, till he has exhausted the very last resources of invention and description. And even the hour which may have been appointed for devotion is not so sacred but that it may be claimed in preference by the occasion of performing some signal act of charity, on the principle that mercy is a more acceptable offering to the great Object of devotion than even sacrifice. A person of discernment and

self-command will know how to withdraw his proceedings from under the rules of the practical system which he has deliberately adopted and still approves, for the sake of effecting a good for which that system could not provide, and how to return again to a strict observance of that method. The difference between him who makes his method an absolute law, and him who uses it as a contrivance of expediency, is the same as that between a strong-minded prince who has a chief officer, by means of whom he subjects other men, and a weak one who has a chief officer to whom he is subjected himself.

§ 6. The habit of Observation might be mentioned as another mean of preventing the total waste of short unavoidable intervals of time. It is very difficult, no doubt, to subdue our impatience enough for the exercise of thought, while arrested by some obstacle on the road, detained at a disagreeable inn, fixed in a corner till the crowd assembled by some public spectacle is cleared away, standing under a shed during an unexpected shower, with no such person as Burke to amuse the time, waiting for admittance at some public office, staying at a place of appointment an hour after the time fixed for meeting a man of business, expecting the negligent friends who are engaged to join in an undertaking or excursion, wearing out the day in expectation of being called as a witness in a court, or enduring hours of inconvenience in order to hear some distinguished orator. But if this impatience could be re-

pressed, and the mind strongly prompted to try what it can perceive or obtain, we should find that every situation could supply to our thoughts something worth our being detained in it during such an interval.

I need not observe that the most dull or disgusting scene inevitably contains objects which lead a philosophic mind into that track of thought where it soon loses itself in wonder, darkness, and infinity. But it is not that kind of attention to present objects from which the mind merely takes the hint to retire into remote speculations that I am recommending, but that which fixes the mind completely on what is before it, and vigilantly watches every circumstance. By this watchful attention to the appearance, manners and conversation, for instance, of a company of human beings, among whom a man may be reluctantly thrown and detained for an hour, he may discriminate the various characters, may detect their prejudices, tempers, and leading objects of pursuit; he may nearly ascertain the manner in which they have been educated, the kind of society to which they have been accustomed, the opinions they tacitly entertain of one another, and how they would any of them act in any given situation. He may add to his knowledge of human nature something which he would never have known if he had not happened to be thus detained. We all know in what manner Swift acquired a large share of that knowledge of human nature which a better man

might have put to an invaluable use. There is not a look, a tone, or an attitude, from which an acute observer may not catch something to assist his speculations on human creatures. If only faces were presented to his attention, and the persons did not speak or move while he was there, let him consider how many observations would in a short time be suggested by these mere silent faces to a painter, a statuary, an anatomist, and a sagacious detector of characters. Even the appearance and actions of brutes afford subjects of thought and interest to a philosophic mind. Sometimes the place where a man is compelled to spend an unwilling interval may present specimens of art, mechanical processes, or relics of antiquity. Or if nothing else can engage his observation, he may employ it on himself. It will be well worth while to observe that very impatience which makes him so uneasy, and so displeased with everything about him. It will be curious to perceive how the fretted and restless feeling rises and extends through the whole mind, obscures every pleasing idea, freezes every gentle sentiment, carries him to the antipodes of all the sublime objects which he was perhaps musing on an hour before, and, in short, affects his mind *all over*, if I may so express it, with a feeling as disagreeable as that inflicted on his body by a bleak north wind. He may observe the effect which this impatience has for the time on his judgment of persons and things, how comparatively unamiable in his view it renders perhaps his

best friend, who may, through a slight inadvertency or from a cause absolutely unavoidable, have occasioned him this irksome interval ; how valuable it makes the advantage appear, or how exquisite it represents the pleasure, which is lost during this interval ; how certain it is that he should have obtained that advantage or pleasure, and how much like enemies all the persons about him become in his esteem, if they have even in no degree contributed to the cause of his uneasiness. But it were endless to enumerate the subjects of observation by means of which a watchful mind may alleviate the tediousness and prevent the total loss of those intervals of time which will sometimes happen to the most diligent and methodical improver of it.

§ 7. Books of short essays or light history, carried perhaps in the pocket, have been often recommended for filling up these vacancies. And they are very proper in situations of some degree of tranquillity, and where a recourse to them will not defeat its own object, by exciting those sly notices which look or speak the charge of affectation in a manner too visible or audible not to disturb and withdraw the attention. It is comparatively seldom that a person can adopt this expedient in the presence of others without attracting this kind of notice, or at least exciting in them a disposition to incommode him in some way or other, in revenge for this practical avowal that he does not deem them worth either talking or listening to. And the inclination to ridicule and tricks of

petty revenge is greatly heightened in some cases by the silly and demure gravity of face and certain grimaces of significance affected by a reader whose general appearance or whose manner and speech, if he should occasionally be prompted or necessitated to divert his attention, quickly indicate that all his reading has failed to give him dignity or sense. The advantage of thus occupying an interval with a book will be chiefly confined to the situations where either on the one hand he is to spend the time quite alone, or on the other in some assembly in which the number gives each one the privilege of being a stranger to those around. If the spaces thus filled up by the assistance of a book are very short, it will be useful to take a slight review, at a season of more leisure, of what has been read in a number of these intervals, in order to prevent its being altogether forgotten. Indeed, I think these brief intervals will do so little justice to the connection in any book treating of a subject at considerable extent, and will fix in the memory such extremely faint traces of small pieces that have no connection, that I would recommend the time to be employed in just familiarising to the eye something which has been often inspected before, and must be often inspected again, in order to acquire as perfect an acquaintance with it as with the alphabet. The grammar of a language which a person has occasion to acquire or recover, the brief abstract of a science, a chronological abridgment of history, a synopsis of the arguments

relating to any interesting subject, may with advantage be looked over fifty or a hundred times, for the purpose of rendering the recollection of any part of them, whenever they are wanted, prompt and infallible. The degree of facility which would be obtained in studying or applying the respective branches of knowledge, by such reiterated impressions of their terms, definitions, and elementary schemes, on the memory, would probably much exceed anything that could be gained by occupying the same number of short spaces with a transient attention to regular compositions. And a man may easily carry about with him one of these small elementary works, and change it for another relating to a different subject, whenever he pleases.

The evils of which I have thus far remarked, the contented idleness, the protracted slumber, the irksome listlessness, and the loss of short intervals, destroy time in the way of making it a perfect vacancy. The accusation is, that a man does absolutely nothing ; but the most busy employment of time might nevertheless be a waste of it, even though no part of that employment of it consisted in anything commonly called vice ; and in the following parts of the Essay it may be permitted to exercise as little forbearance in the censure of trivial and useless occupations as of perfect idleness.

CHAPTER III.

SOLITARY LIFE.

- § 1.—FEW PERSONS SPEND THE GREATEST PART OF THEIR TIME ALONE.—DESCRIPTION OF THE SOLITARY CLASSES: ENVIED BY PERSONS IN ACTIVE LIFE.
- § 2.—EVILS OF SOLITUDE IN REFERENCE TO THE ESTIMATE OF THE VALUE OF TIME.
- § 3.—THE QUIETNESS OF SOLITUDE PREVENTS THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.—EFFECT ON A PERSON OF INERT TEMPERAMENT.
- § 4.—EFFECT OF SOLITUDE ON PERSONS OF SANGUINE TEMPERAMENT.—TENDENCY TO INDULGENCE IN MERE AMUSEMENT.—INTELLECTUAL VAGRANCY.—A FEW FAVOURITE TRACKS OF THOUGHT.—THE CASE OF AN ARDENT PERSONAL ATTACHMENT.—SELF-CONGRATULATORY RECOLLECTIONS.
- § 5.—DIFFICULTY OF CORRECTING HABITS OF ILL-REGULATED THOUGHT: PLEAS ALLEGED IN THEIR EXTENUATION; BUT THE IDEAS DWELT UPON BY THE INDOLENT MAN, IN SOLITUDE, WILL HARDLY EVER BE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CLASS.
- § 6.—THE PLEA OF THE PROMOTION OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE CONSIDERED.—THE SELF-KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED IN SOLITUDE WILL BE SLIGHT, BECAUSE THE OCCASIONS ARE WANTING WHICH ACT AS TESTS OF CHARACTER.
- § 7.—THE BAD HABITS OF A SOLITARY PERSON, IF FAVOURED

BY SOLITUDE, GROW FASTER THAN ANY OTHERS, BECAUSE THERE IS LITTLE TO INTERRUPT THEIR PROGRESS.

§ 8.—IN SOLITUDE A MAN IS REMOVED FROM ONE OF THE BEST STANDARDS OF MEASURING HIS EXERTIONS AND ATTAINMENTS, THE COMPARISON OF THEM WITH THOSE OF OTHER MEN.

§ 9.—ONE OF THE EVILS OF SOLITUDE IS ITS EXEMPTION FROM SOCIAL OBSERVANCE AND JURISDICTION.

§ 1. THE observations which form the greatest part of the preceding chapters, may seem too general for any great practical utility, if they are not more distinctly applied to the various occupations of men. In the succeeding parts, therefore, I shall attempt to illustrate the subject as involving its claims with several of the situations and pursuits of life. And of the particular conditions of life, the one which may naturally present itself first is that of the persons who spend the greatest portion of their time in solitude. The number of such persons is comparatively not very great. It consists of a few persons who have abandoned from disappointment the pursuits of ambition and the bustle of what is called public life, and whose chagrin cannot be mitigated by more peaceful and humble society; of some individuals whose eminence or pride of intellect acknowledges no equals, and cannot be gratified by the attention or flattery of inferiors in the places where their residence is perhaps necessarily fixed; of persons having only one domestic rela-

tion, who is almost continually absent on business or enterprise; of those whose grief for the loss of their dearest relatives having settled into a habitual pensiveness, has made them fond of the retirement in which they have indulged it; of the very small number who may practise an ascetic devotion; and of the most recluse order of studious men. The solitary class will include, by a considerable latitude of the term, those who have domestic connections, but meet them only at intervals of the day, and constantly spend many successive hours alone, whether in study or in any other employment.

Men whose lives are necessarily occupied by active social engagements, but who notwithstanding cherish a very animated wish for those high attainments to which solitary application is indispensable, envy the persons whose situation permits whole weeks and months of seclusion in which the time can be employed according to their choice, and in which these busy men are fully assured that they should themselves, if the privilege were theirs, make the most marvellous acquisitions. They imagine that the self-congratulation with which they occasionally seize a few quiet hours, the earnestness with which they are stimulated to employ them by knowing they will be quickly gone, and the zest which they feel in the employment, as much from its novelty or rarity as intrinsic interest, would continue unabated through a whole year of solitude. This privilege of retirement is, indeed, of immense value,

but the envy would be less if all the disadvantages incident to it were known.

§ 2. It may be presumed that the greater number of solitary persons are exempted from the absolute necessity of devoting their time to any one class of occupations, and can choose both in what they will employ it, and whether they will employ it at all. This exemption from one kind of bondage betrays a man into another. The aversion to labour, a radical principle of the human constitution, is left to its natural operation, and assumes a predominance over the man in proportion as the cogency of necessity is withdrawn, unless there is in its place some strong passion, as ambition, or a very authoritative conscience. Even in a social condition it has this operation; but in solitary life there is still less to rescue him from this tyranny, and stimulate him to a diligent use of his time.

In the first place, the consciousness, which will be rendered much more distinct in a life habitually solitary, and exempted from all claims of necessity from without, than it would be in a life of equal leisure spent chiefly in society—the consciousness of having such an ample space of time lowers the estimate of its parts, and especially of the part that is present. In this as in other cases, plenty tends to waste; and since that waste may still seem to leave plenty behind, its criminality is but slightly felt, and the man who has acquired the habits of a solitary idler is peculiarly in danger of letting the extent

of his privilege beguile him out of his reformation, by still presenting a long perspective of unoccupied time in which all *that* may be accomplished which is neglected now. If he has trifled away this morning, which he had intended to devote to an useful employment, he quickly satisfies himself by considering that the evening hours are equally free from avocations, and will be equally adapted to his purpose. If the evening follows the fate of the morning, he has the full clear space of to-morrow before him, entirely at his disposal throughout—a space, as he very complacently observes to himself, of sixteen or eighteen hours. On closing the evening with the reflection that he has not done what he intended and what he ought, he would feel severe mortification, and the wasted day would appear to him an inestimable treasure thrown away, if he felt that in thus neglecting a duty he had precluded himself, probably for ever, from performing it; for that, from this evening, his time must be all unavoidably engaged for a long period in some other business. But this conviction of the value of what he has lost passes very smoothly over his mind, while future days are offering themselves to his imagination as unappropriated to any particular employment, and each of them just as proper for his purpose as the one that has been consumed in idleness. And if to-morrow he *should* happen to have resolution enough to perform what he is intending, he will easily, amidst his self-congratulation, forget that he has ut-

terly wasted this preceding day. Thus even his conscience at last may become reconciled to accept a little occasional exertion in lieu of the habitual industry of a whole life.

§ 3. Another circumstance, very greatly tending to prevent the Improvement of Time in solitude, is its quietness. A few minds appear to possess, in their very nature, an endowment beyond all price, an activity that can never rest ; to a mind thus animated intrinsically with an impelling power, it may be an important advantage to be much withdrawn into the quietness in which this internal spring of motion might steadily act in one direction without being distracted from the uniformity of its operation by the irregular and contrary pressures of external forces. But minds in general have so little of this self-actuating principle, that, if withdrawn from the reach of external stimuli, they will fall asleep, and sleep as long as Endymion. Their activity is what Dr. Brown describes life to be, a forced state. The utmost excitement communicated to them, amidst the active scenes of the world, is but just enough to keep them up to a moderate pitch of exertion ; nor do they often acquire, in being held up to this pitch ever so many years, a habit which would preserve them in a continuance of the exertion, if at last the artificial excitement should cease. Let it be the lot and the taste of some person of this inert disposition to pass away long periods almost alone in a rural situation of silent tran-

quillity, where the impulse that will reach him from the active system of society will be faint, like the indistinct dull sounds heard from a great city by a man who retires to a hill or a wood at the distance of a league. The habits into which this detached individual will quietly grow, will form themselves on the principle of living with the smallest possible quantity of action of any kind. As to the mental part of action, the chief and most successful of its employments will be to find out reasons why things should not, or need not be done, in which employment very dull minds often manifest a surprising ingenuity, and reasons are found all but "as plenty as blackberries." There is little to refute these reasons in the stillness of his retreat, supposing the means of subsistence to be secure without his exertions, and all his desires to be moderate. Some slight inconveniences may accompany his indolence, but they to him seem more easy to be borne than the labour necessary to remove them. The scenes and changes of nature convey no reproach to his listless conscience ; its pleasing aspects, its spontaneous luxuriance, its soft gales, its evening tranquillity, soothe him into the *jucunda oblivia* which the animated poet only affected to desire. The circumstances of the changes from one season to another, present just enough diversity and occasion for little employments, and excite just enough attention, to prevent a total stagnation of his ideas. And the more rugged seasons of the year only make him so much

the better pleased that he is not one of those foolish, bustling people who are exposing themselves to all inclemencies in pursuits of commerce, curiosity, or adventure. Perhaps a quiet domestic applauds his wisdom, and when his self-complacency requires vouchers of a higher order, he calls to mind that philosophers and saints, and even monarchs and conquerors, when experience had made them wise, have all joined to condemn and despise the vain tumult of the world ; and he is perhaps not a little flattered by the idea that pure good sense has led him to a conviction and a choice to which many of them were not brought even by all their vexations and disappointments till a later period of life.

In this state of quietude the whole mechanism of the mind will be regulated down to a slowness of movement unknown and inconceivable to man in an active career. The course of thought which is so rapid in minds naturally animated or strongly excited in interesting pursuits, that a multitude of ideas in the succession elude the most watchful attempt to discriminate or number them, will proceed so sedately that every idea might almost be separately observed, like a train of heavy carriages moving along the road, if they were not rendered almost imperceptible by another cause, the extreme slightness of their quality. The succession will even at times appear to be discontinued, leaving an interval so devoid of ideas that it might be asked, What will be the next ? or, Will there ever come another ?

This listlessness of the internal agency will necessarily extend into whatever little transactions or manual operations may be required or chosen in this composed life. And its influence will especially prevail in lengthening the interval between each inconsiderable operation and the next. When a formal interval is not intended to be interposed, the very transition to the next employment will resemble in expedition that of the animal named the Sloth from one tree to another. If the employment has really been of considerable duration and effort, the mind is disposed to spend a long time in complacently reviewing it throughout, and dwelling on the merit of success before any effort is directed to what ought to have immediately followed. To have examined and settled a neglected account, to have written a long letter, to have marked out a different path to be made in a garden, or to have gone a few miles on some affair of business, will seem an exploit deserving to be acted over again in imagination, and to be followed by many hours of repose.

§ 4. This is a description of the effect of solitary quietness on minds of a naturally sober disposition, and of confined faculties; it has a somewhat different influence, though not less hostile to the Improvement of Time, on persons of a more sanguine temperament, and possessing a lively imagination, with perhaps a very considerable measure of mental attainment. It will be impossible for them to endure an absolute vacancy of mind, or be soothed into dull

perpetual repose, notwithstanding their indolence may recoil from all well-ordered labour. With passions to put imagination in activity, and with imagination to kindle the glow of the passions, they will find or make subjects of interest even in the utmost seclusion from society and the transactions of the world. And if they can subject themselves to no laws, and devote themselves to no selected subjects of regular application, this almost spontaneous activity will amuse and waste itself in useless, endless musings.

It is true, that a man possessing any considerable energy of the passions will generally be impelled by them to the adoption of designs which are to be prosecuted in the more active scenes of the world, and that, if his circumstances confine him for the present very much to solitude, his thoughts will often be employed in devising expedients, or imagining events by means of which he may escape from it, or in bitterly deploring the insuperable necessity that condemns him to endure it. But yet there are men capable of great ardour of feeling, and who are sometimes highly interested in the contemplation of schemes and objects which only activity can execute or obtain, but in whom every such feeling that would thus prompt to exertion is so effectually balanced by indolence, accompanied possibly by a certain refined species of pride which forbids to attempt anything they are not certain of performing well, that the occasional ardour produces no habitual wish to live and excel among active beings. They make a

merit perhaps of their having sense enough to know that the world can do without their interference, and could not, therefore, be made to feel itself laid under any considerable obligation by their exertions. And as the busy world does not appear to want them, so neither do they want the busy world : since their employments, if they are attempting anything that shall involve sufficient effort to deserve that name, will be of a kind relating so exclusively to themselves as to require the least possible communication with society, and of a kind which they can prosecute or suspend, or change or abandon, according to their own judgment or caprice, without being accountable to any one. Amusement will be the more appropriate term for their occupations ; and as their amusement will be greatly assisted by what will diversify their ideas without the expense of the slightest mental effort, they will wish for regular or occasional information of the transactions of society, though they entirely withdraw from taking any part. Such information, conveyed by means of periodical publications, and by any other channels, will greatly aid the resources for that desultory musing which is almost certain to become the occupation and the habit in solitude of an indolent person of some fancy and of a half-cultivated understanding, who has pursued knowledge in various departments, just so far as he was borne by a temporary excitement of feeling, which has generally been repressed by the first appearance of diffi-

culty. A person that has for a good while indulged this most pernicious habit, is in an almost desperate state for any chance of learning to improve Time, unless it were possible he could resolve to quit his retirement, and by one effort throw himself into some course of active business, or unless he should be constrained to do so by some event taking place independently of his choice. And if this wretched condition of the mind has been formed on the abuse of the privilege of a pecuniary independence, we might deem it a fortunate circumstance for that independence to be annihilated by a fire, or by the bankruptcy of persons to whom the property may have been entrusted. Any failure of the intellectual means of perpetuating the habit is beyond all fear or hope. All things that have left in the memory the slightest trace of having been the objects of attention in any part of all the past life, will, at one time or another, return with most uncereemonious intrusion, generally when least capable of being useful, and assume, and be permitted to occupy the mind once more, whatever other more important ideas may claim its immediate attention, and however little these casually recurring ones are related to any subject of present importance. In a mind possessing a great diversity of ideas, in the acquisition of which no systematic method was ever observed, and which, therefore, are very slightly associated with one another, the whole succession of notions and images during one day of idle musing would

probably exhibit, if all expressed in words in the order of their succession almost as complete a confusion as if all the pages of a book were cut into single lines, and these lines, after being blended in a heap, read in the order in which they might happen to be taken from the mass. Frequently one of the ideas in this heterogeneous crowd will be but faintly conceived, and becoming still more and more faint each instant it remains, and not being immediately followed by another, will leave the mind a moment or two without any consciousness of thinking ; till this consciousness is roused by the starting of an idea totally unconnected, as far as can be observed, with that which had just vanished. Sometimes one of these languid, half-formed ideas will be pushed away by the quick entrance of a more spirited one, which also shall be as quickly displaced by another and another relating to quite different subjects. Ideas relating to things remote or familiar, to subjects either grave or trifling, will come promiscuously, not one of them affording the slightest hint of what is to follow. Within an hour, or even within five minutes, the mind may entertain ideas from the opposite extremities of the whole range of thought. Transient thoughts of great events or sublime objects, thoughts of the system of the Universe, of Eternity, or Deity, may be intermixed with recollections of a ludicrous anecdote, the consideration of what money the person has in his pocket, or with thoughts about the appearance

of his dress. In short, anything he has ever seen, heard, or read, all the events of history, all the scenes he has visited, and persons he has known, all he has ever fancied, projected, or wished, all that his imagination can still be busy in representing to him as actual or possible, unreal or impossible, all this may come into his mind, and all this is permitted to come in infinite caprices of connection and changes of disorder. All the crowd of objects moving in the most frequented avenue of a great city would not exhibit half so strong an image of confusion.

When a man, who has once been accustomed to a degree of method in the acquisition and application of his ideas, resigns his mind, freed from all restraint, to endless musings, there will not be so total a disconnection among his thoughts. If he has ever applied himself to reasoning in any of its forms, but especially the severer ones of mathematical or metaphysical study, a slight degree of the regulated operation so acquired will mechanically and unconsciously prevail in the idlest and the most dissipated sports of mental freedom, as persons considerably practised in dancing or in military attitudes and manœuvres exhibit, without thinking of it, the effect of these habits in their ordinary movements. The thoughts of such an idle recluse, when he surrenders them to a complete anarchy, will yet retain certain analogies, though in a very loose manner, will sometimes happen to follow each other in a regular connection through three or four steps, and when they

have no immediate or direct coherence they will have the slight relation of belonging to some one general class of ideas or subjects ; the mind will not pass directly from the zenith to the nadir without taking a moment's notice of anything between : if the first idea should be that of the sun, the second will not be concerning the Chinese wall, and the third respecting shillings and pence. But though the train will be somewhat less ridiculous than this, it will probably be very little more useful ; it will have but a very slight resemblance to that rigorous deduction of thoughts which is the mean of ascertaining truth, and that harmonious combination of images in which taste is exercised and improved.

Neither will it be of much more use that, instead of wandering amidst an infinite dissipation of promiscuous variety, the thoughts make for themselves a few favourite tracks, like the wild goats of the mountains, so long as they are still left altogether at their liberty. Perhaps the greater number of persons in indolent retirement, who let their thoughts take their own course, may perceive them thus falling into the direction of some few subjects from which they deviate into many occasional diversities, but to which they constantly recur for their most agreeable and prolonged indulgence. For instance, an ardent attachment to some one person at a distance will furnish a subject of endless musing to a solitary mind, which will easily occupy itself a great part of each day for months or years in dwelling on the

qualities, representing to itself all the habits, manners, looks, tones, and retracing the history, of that person. Imagination will place the solitary man as in the company of such a favourite individual, by a lively fiction of circumstances felt as if existing at the present moment, or by recalling the images and renewing the feelings of past social situations ; or by creating amidst the vacancy and possibility of future time all those forms of social happiness which an affectionate mind would love to realize. If the thoughts should be drawn away from this subject a while by an occasional novelty, it will be curious to observe how instinctively they will tend to the same direction, and how very slight a glance that way will be the cause of an instant and total return of the whole mind to its accustomed society and captivity. If sometimes a foreign subject is resolutely adopted for intellectual exercise, it will be surprising to perceive how many associations the ideas really belonging to this subject will seem to have with that habitual subject which the mind has been made to quit for a few moments. If no other association occurred, it would soon and often be suggested to the mind how much more satisfactory it would be to pursue this subject in the society and with the assistance of the valued friend. And even though no relation at all between the subject and the friend suggested itself in any form, the mind would, by the mere strength of its propensity and habit, make very frequent chasms in the train of thought by quitting

it to revisit its more favourite subject. The number of distinct thoughts respecting this favourite subject, acquired by a long indulgence of fancy and affection, aided by recollected seasons of actual companionship, will become so great, that the possible combinations of them in the mind will be endless, while, at the same time, each one of the pleasing images, and each combination, will bear a frequent, perhaps an indefinite, repetition. Thus an employment of the mind, of a nature at once the most indolent and the most fascinating, will consume away, without the smallest benefit to the person who thinks, or the person who is thought on, periods of time which, by a different application in other hands, have been enough to accomplish the character of scholars, philosophers, or Christians.

Or if there is no peculiarly interesting friend at once to animate and engross the ideas of a mind which yields itself up entirely to its spontaneous impulses, there will generally not be wanting some subjects to which it will have a continual tendency to turn, and on which it will dwell with prolonged and repeated thought. Especially if this indolent recluse has ever passed through any practical adventures in which he acquitted himself, in his own opinion, with great address or energy, he will scarcely ever be tired of returning in imagination into the scene, and recounting all the circumstances. He will revolve with delight a whole hour, or even several hours, a single ingenious manœuvre, an act

of courage, a generous concession, a well-timed speech, or a lucky reply, which his memory has faithfully treasured to regale his self-love. A very brief course of adventure thus passed through and recollected will furnish a copious indulgence of thought; for there is an inexpressible charm in the consideration *who* it was that acted or spoke; fine things which a man recollects as said or done by himself will delight him in reflection a thousand times longer, to speak with moderation, than things of the same merit done or said by another. Even the graceful conduct or expressions of such a peculiarly valued friend as I have just now supposed, will not bear to be so often recalled or long retained as his own. His own have a living freshness that cannot fade; they are the true evergreens of memory. And if a very narrow compass of adventures is enough for such ample indulgence of retrospective musing, what inexhaustible resources for this indulgence will be in the possession of a person who may have spent many years in a series of interesting events and uncommon situations. Supposing Bruce, for instance, to have been capable of subsiding into this habit in his retirement, after his return to his native place, he might easily have consumed the whole remainder of his life, had it been twice the length that it was, in revolving the endless diversity of scenes which his imagination could have recalled, while the ten thousand changing feelings which they once had caused would be partly revived, and while self-com-

placency would prolong his reflections on each of the numerous proofs of his resolution and most versatile ability.

§ 5. After this most vicious habit of surrendering the thoughts either to a boundless dissipation or to such a monopoly as I have described, for a year or two, with little interruption, it will have become a painful exertion to compel them, even for half-an-hour, into a process of severe investigation. If a man of conscience and self-reflection, who should have fallen into this habit, could help being mortified, he might be very much amused during an hour of such effort in observing how many times his mind will attempt to escape from the labour and the subject. To say a hundred times is far too little. The horror of labour will keep it every moment in a state infinitely susceptible of temptation; the slightest possible touch will stop and divert it. Not only the recurrence of any of the ideas habitually indulged, and which are very certain to intrude, but the occurrence of any foreign idea, the most casual suggestion, the most insignificant circumstance presented to the senses, will prompt the mind to a much more vigorous effort to fly off, than it was making to advance right forward. For if the man is absolutely resolved it shall *not* fly off, and attempts to arrest it as it is just escaping, a violent struggle will be necessary to retain it, and force it back into the right direction. The languor with which it proceeds in the right direction, is converted into agility

and strength the instant it takes a wrong one. During the very effort to force it from the thought which is seducing it from its proper object, another impertinent thought of a quite different or opposite kind may strike it, and in the twinkling of an eye give it another wrong direction, from which it will be another effort to reclaim it. So that the rider of the wildest horse had never so laborious and vexatious a task. When the hour is finished the man will have to consider with shame and indignation that perhaps three-fourths of it have been spent merely in the effort to retain his mind to the subject; and that while the one-fourth is all that has really been occupied in the consideration of that subject, the interrupted manner of thinking of it has made that little portion of time of still less value than even the same number of minutes would have been, if filled with a close connected train of thought. This labour of keeping the attention directed towards the subject, and which, being but the mere pre-requisite to thinking, does not advance one stage in the investigation of that subject, will be a more painful exertion than that which a well-disciplined mind, which could fix its attention at once, would have felt in the closest investigation of it during the same space of time.

A man will be less determined to reform this bad habit if he has found out some extenuations. He may plead with some degree of truth that by reviving in his mind so often the ideas of objects and

scenes once presented to him, and dwelling on them so long, he shall fix in his mind a more perfect conception of them, and secure a permanent remembrance ; and to have distinct, strongly delineated ideas, he will observe, has always been regarded as one of the most important objects in the mental economy. This plea applies only to that kind of indolent musing which continually returns to some few favourite subjects, for the dissipation of thought amidst an ever-changing and promiscuous diversity of ideas, will give no one idea a clearer definition in the mind. And it is evident enough that the ideas which the mind revolves the most frequently, with the most interest, will become the most perfect of its conceptions ; they will become almost as distinct as objects of sight ; it would be a most enviable mind that should possess all its ideas in this perfect form. But the extenuation is very slight ; for, first, they will hardly ever be ideas of the most important class that a mind thus abandoned to its own indulgence will choose to dwell on ; and in the next place, the clearness of single ideas, especially of a few ideas, is of inconsiderable importance separately from their combination. The images in a dream are often as perfectly defined as those which have been engraved by a thousand repetitions of our waking thoughts ; but the total want of that connexion and dependence which should give our thoughts a bearing towards the proof of some speculative proposition, or the enforcement of some practical principle, renders useless

both these representations to the mind in sleep, and the undisciplined musings of the waking dreamer.

§ 6. It is not impossible it may occur to the criminal I am condemning, to plead that self-knowledge is one of the most important of all moral attainments, and that this is promoted by the habit of withdrawing from the external world and conversing with our own ideas. And it is obvious that a person who finds his chief occupation and interest in his own thoughts is placed so fully in sight of his own mind, that it would be very strange indeed if he could avoid making some observations on its character and economy. One would think it almost inevitable that he must be sometimes reminded to inquire what is the nature of an agent that can thus, while all is externally still, pursue an endless diversity of things, and visit so many known and unknown scenes ; and what is the character of the agent which seeks that kind of things and of scenes which he may observe that his mind habitually prefers. He cannot well avoid observing in what manner he is affected in recollecting the various circumstances of his past conduct ; they will be very often brought to the view of such a man, and the most remarkable of them at least will certainly be contemplated with some relation to his conscience. When acting, as he often will, in imaginary situations, a little reflection would detect some indications of his true disposition. His wishes, his regrets, his projects (if he forms any), his reflections on the characters of greater or meaner,

better or worse men than himself, being more involuntary than those of a mind to which systematical discipline might be supposed to have given a more artificial cast, would admonish him, if he had the smallest tendency to self-research, of the principles which must prevail in his mind to give involuntarily this direction to his thoughts. And if, while almost wholly detached from all actual society, he is also free from the attraction which would carry him habitually into the imaginary society of some distant favourite individual, it would seem as if he must be often forced to think of himself by that propensity which naturally leads us to think of persons with more interest than things.

It is possible, therefore, that in the musings of solitary indolence a man will acquire a *little* more acquaintance with himself than the same man would gain amidst the activity of business, or the continual dissipation of society. Yet his acquisitions of this kind are likely to be extremely small. For besides that a solitary life precludes those numerous occasions which in a more social and busy situation operate as tests to bring out the several parts of the character — these musing habits perhaps tend as much to prevent or deceive self-observation as to promote and assist it. If the thoughts are changing with incessant volitancy from one object to another, through a promiscuous and unlimited variety, the mind cannot dwell on any one long enough to receive from it any suggestion relative to its own character ;

or if, on the other hand, the thoughts continually return to a few very favourite subjects, on which they can expatiate without ever being tired, the interest of these subjects will absorb the mind too much to let its attention turn often on itself. They could not have become such favourite subjects but by their power of drawing out the thoughts and feelings so effectually as to save the mind from sinking into the uneasy consciousness of its own insipid and vacant condition. Another cause which will diminish the chance of self-knowledge to be obtained in this indulgence of idle musing, is the incomparably greater facility with which thought may be pursued outward into all its capricious forms and casual connexions, than traced inward to its origin, in that particular state of mind from which it sprung, and which it indicated. All would be labour the one way, all is amusement the other ; and labour is the most frightful of all things to such a mind as I am describing. Again, the most valuable portion of our self-knowledge must be gained by reflecting on what it is painful to reflect on,—the unworthy aspects of our character and conduct. But as a mind yielded up to its own idle indulgence is in pursuit of amusement alone, it will instinctively avoid these gloomy subjects and all the salutary reflections which they might suggest. Let any man who is sunk into this miserable habit make the effort for once to observe the course of his thoughts, when exempted from all control, and he will wonder to see how well,

amidst the most irregular wanderings, they can find their way to all the subjects of self-complacency. There is not a favourable indication in his whole character, nor a commendable action in his whole history, to which they cannot proceed as directly, in spite of all their disorder, as the eye of a practised geographer can fix on any well-known place in a map. Nor does the enthusiast who, after many years of laborious research, has persuaded himself that he has ascertained the exact site of Paradise, dwell on the spot with more self-complacency, as he points it out in that map to every credulous friend, than this musing solitary indulges his thoughts on these flattering parts in the picture of his character. His judgment will not deny that there are faults, both serious and numerous ; but his thoughts, when left to ramble or to fix just where they please, will seldom be so perversely partial to mortification as to fix themselves long on the disagreeable parts of self-reflection.

It is to be observed, besides, that though the thoughts should sometimes, in their dissipated vagrancy, fix for a moment on the unfavourable points of our characters among other things, and even admit a just impression of each, these several just ideas would be so little adjusted into any systematic scheme, that they would contribute but little to a correct whole estimate, and, therefore, but little to the purpose of permanent self-admonition and correction. We can never form a complete idea of the

magnitude and consequences of a fault, but by seeing it in its connexion with the other parts, and with the whole conformation of the character ; and, therefore, every occasional discovery which is disclosed to our reflections ought to be referred to its place in the general scheme, where we shall always know where to find it, and shall see it in its relation to all the parts of the character.

§ 7. The bad habits of a solitary person, if they are those which solitude peculiarly promotes, grow faster than any others, because there is so little to interrupt their progress, or suspend the influences under which they are forming. In active and social scenes, the changes of circumstances necessarily prevent the mind from remaining long in the same state, and this prevention comes from an external cause, independent of the will. On the contrary, in solitary life this interruption must generally be an act of choice, and but little assisted by external circumstances. And to make this voluntary and unaided effort so resolutely as to be effectual with respect to the habit in question, will be one of the severest labours in the whole system of moral duties. The mind, which is already sunk through indulgence into languor—which has verified the possibility of being happy without exertion—which looks back on a day, or even an hour of hard effort, with the feeling with which a man reviews a situation of peril, which he is perhaps not sorry to have encountered since he has survived it, but of which

he deprecates the repetition—the mind which, when imperiously recalled for a little while from its wanderings, has the feelings of a prisoner till it is let loose to wander again—which has a thousand ways of escaping, if attempted to be forced into any regular undertaking—which has a number of real or fancied virtues on which to indulge its contemplations—which feels still less and less necessity or taste for society the longer it has been relinquished—which dreads especially to meet with any person in whose company it is necessary either to make a great effort or acquiesce in the humiliation of extreme inferiority—which has adjusted and smoothed into agreement with its habits the little surrounding circumstances of its solitary situation, where each room, and window, and article of furniture, and wall, and tree, and adjacent meadow, seems to have adapted itself to its tranquillity, and where the smallest alteration in any of these is felt a grievance till it becomes familiarized,—this very same mind is, by its own determination and effort, to rouse itself from this sloth, to recall its thoughts from this dissipation, and to commence and prosecute without the incentive of an external necessity, a plan of unrelenting discipline and systematic labour! If all that is fabled of Hercules were true, he never accomplished anything much harder.

§ 8. Another circumstance, in the extreme degree unfavourable to the full improvement of time in a life of habitual solitude, is, that a man is removed

far away from one of the best practical standards for measuring his exertions and attainments ; he is withdrawn from the immediate view of what is accomplished by other men, and the immediate comparison of his performance with theirs. Information may not be wanting respecting the general pace of the active movements of society ; accounts may be received of the indefatigable labour which one man undergoes to reach political eminence, and another to consummate his fortune of one or two hundred thousand pounds ; the indolent recluse may be apprized of the toils of a poor man, almost unremitted, from four o'clock in the morning to nine at night, to support a numerous family ; of the number of cases which a busy medical man attends to in the course of a day or week ; of the number of figures and scenes created by the pencil of an assiduous artist ; or of even the preparatory discipline and endlessly repeated exercises indispensable to make an accomplished player or a rope-dancer ; he may be informed of these, and innumerable other specimens of industry, and imagination may picture the labours before him. But imagination can act over all these labours with such wondrous facility, that it totally misrepresents and dissembles the real measure of the toil. Imagination makes nothing of turning merchant, exploring sources of trade, planning adventures, and dictating or writing fifty or a hundred letters a day ; all the details being thrown out, this is but the work of half an hour. Imagination shall in one

hour, and without vexation, fatigue, or anxiety, go through the whole previous discipline of a pleader, shall conquer physical or mental inaptitude to eloquence, by speaking like Demosthenes, with pebbles in the mouth and a sword over the shoulder, by running up a hill, or declaiming to the waves amidst the tumult; and shall advance to the courts of law, through a long avenue of hostile folios and quartos, placed like the double threatening row of barbarian giants between which the hero is obliged to pass in some of the old romances. The same may be said of any other department of strenuous exertion. The slight estimate which the imagination forms of these labours is so inadequate and unjust, that a man would be ashamed to recollect it if brought into a situation of immediately witnessing or practically undertaking the course of exertion. Let him, after years of indolence, take a station in which he must write a large portion of such letters, have the care of devising and deliberating on those schemes, be detained in the never-ending task of repeating those exercises, or return the ten-thousandth time to those abhorred volumes; let him attempt such a course, or let him even but be in a situation to see it for a while, and he will be compelled to regard with envious wonder the persons who do all this as an ordinary occupation, on which they never think of assuming consequence, and in which they are but on a level with thousands around them. He may endeavour to soothe the chagrin arising from the contrast be-

tween such persons and himself, by deprecating the motive and object of their exertions, but he will still feel severe mortification whenever this contrast of active powers forces itself on his thoughts. And if he has any reflection and conscience with respect to the duties of benevolence, of piety, or of self-improvement, he will be stung with the thought how many great objects there are which unquestionably *deserve* all this earnestness of application, which both his indolence and his judgment may condemn as excessive when directed by some of the motives, and to some of the pursuits, by which he sees it actuated and absorbed. He may justly condemn and despise the mere passion for becoming rich, the ambition of carrying off the prize in the competition of chicanery or rhetoric, and the glory of being the prince of actors or jugglers, or even the most finished perfection in some very fine but very useless art ; but his reason and his moral feelings must be in a very unfortunate state if, from the futility of some modes and motives of strenuous application, he infers the wisdom and innocence of doing nothing ; while there are immense unexplored fields of important truth around him, while there is any definable way in which he can render valuable service to either a friend or an enemy, and while there yet remains anything to be transacted with the Governor of the world, or to be petitioned from Him.

§ 9. The disadvantage of being withdrawn from the view of the best practical standard of exertion

by this seclusion from society, is accompanied with another still greater, arising from the circumstance of exemption from social observance and jurisdiction. The habitual inspection of a few persons whose opinion cannot be slighted, whose approbation, perhaps, involves some material point of interest and who are perhaps exemplary for application or activity themselves, will generally have more influence on a man of indolent dispositions, whether he is a dull sluggard or a vain dreamer, than all the admonitions or reproaches of books or his own reflections ; for as to books, if occasionally he is ashamed, and blushes over them when he is alone, the mortification which no one perceives and becomes its depository and prompter, is very transient ; the book submits without opposition to be closed and put away, and is viewed, after the reproaches it has expressed and the shame it has excited, with the same complacent feeling of safety with which a criminal sees the coffin of the only witness of his crime ; and as to his own reflections, he acquires either the art of conciliating or the habit of escaping them. Our self-accurring thoughts affect us with a tenfold force of mortification or excitement when reflected back from the minds of others (our associates and observers), whether it is that our pride is hurt, or that our conviction is rendered more absolute.

